

# Early Music REVIEW

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When I was shown p. 97 of a copy of Nick Wilson's *Making Early Music in the Modern Age* at the Early Music Exhibition last November, I couldn't resist printing the opening of the second paragraph: "Within the British Early Music scene from the late 1960s onward one figure stands out as having offered timeless service in regards to the dissemination and publishing of facsimile or Urtext performing editions in early music in Britain. That man is Clifford Bartlett..." Very flattering. But the book itself is a mixture of information, mostly direct from major figures and worth reading, but confused by attempts to organise the information by various imposed structures that don't seem to mean very much. The "seven ages of early music" (chapter 2) are forced, and the size of the table showing what fits where needs enlarging up to A3! I add a few points not competing with Brian Robins' review (p.7).

p. 10. The main reason for there being little instrumental medieval music from the middle ages is that the surviving music is minimal. "Authenticity" is difficult to evaluate: for instance, might early pieces have had slower tempos but lots of embellishments?

p. 33 "the National Early Music Association's (NEMA) regional fora": NEMA and each Forum are independent bodies; the only link was the annual meeting of interfora chairman, to which NEMA was invited, but that has not taken place for several years.

p. 58. *Time Out* featured early music in Oct 1978, but that was preceded a few years earlier in *Vogue*, with lots of long hair.

p. 63. The summer school at Bryanston (1948) moved in 1953 to Dartington: they were not separate institutions.

p. 64. I was involved in Ars Nova, but not its successor, The Parley of Instruments.

p. 233 note 20. Inventing a name for an ensemble can be difficult: Gothic Voices had no name until Hugh Keyte thought of it a minute or two before the opening announcement of their first (broadcast) concert.

p. 238 note 20. In the 1970s, the Early Music Centre was basically vegetarian, and meat soup only appeared when Anthony Rooley moved on.

p. 243, note 36. Interesting that the BBC had ten copyists for music, presumably when Denis Stevens worked there in the 1950s. By the time I arrived in the late 1960s, there were only two, with copyists *ad hoc* from outside. CB

## REVIEWS OF MUSIC

Clifford Bartlett

## LATIN, FRENCH &amp; ENGLISH SONGS

**Songs in British Sources c.1150-1300 transcribed and edited by Helen Deeming** (*Musica Britannica* 95). Stainer & Bell, 2013. lx 226pp, £95.00.

My first attempt at musicological research was an edition of English songs (of roughly the period of the volume reviewed here) during my last year at Cambridge (1961): the English Faculty allowed a piece of work to be considered if there was doubt between levels of the tripos. I assume that I wasn't able to discuss it with my director of studies, John Stevens, whose name is probably the one most cited in the introduction of this volume (a bit like Peter Holman in the *Odes on the Death of Henry Purcell* reviewed below). The tendency then was to transcribe in as regular rhythm as possible, as was still fashionable in 1979 when Dobson & Harrison published their *Medieval English Songs*, though the main fault was Dobson's certainty of his amendments to the text.

The introduction is one of MB's longest (no – I haven't opened the other 94 to check!), even though it doesn't begin until page xxv.<sup>1</sup> Editions of early English songs tend to run to between 20 and 30 items, but here there are 115. This is because English musicians set Latin, English and French texts, and English has fewer songs than the other two languages.<sup>2</sup> The editor avoids excess criticism of older editions, but what is transcribed here is sensible. Most of the songs are without lengthy melismas, so various rhythmic uses are possible, but don't need notation, either old or modern. Most of the songs were probably sung by soloists, so shaping the movement of the notes (in relationship with the text) need not be a serious problem.

The songs (words and music) mostly survive in small groups or in isolated examples in non-musical documents. Many of the poems are religious, but not liturgical. Texts are often based on the liturgical sequence form: i.e. two half-verses to the same music, then new music for the next verse, but more freely than most sequences. (I am trying not to write too technically.) The verses are numbered, and line ends are shown by having a larger gap rather than adding a comma in the stave or a barline. Generally, the original notation is not mensural, though there are a few examples where the long and breve pattern is intentional. Now that many of the sources are available online, there is no reason to find means of representing every note shape in the edition. It is excellent that the poems have an English translation, but a pity that the layout doesn't relate to the underlaid musical layout. The translations

1. The first MB I owned was John Stevens *Medieval Carols* (MB4): even then the prelims seemed excessive, with the Preface not starting till p.xii.  
 2. Wolfenbüttel 628, alias W1, has been reinstated to its former St Andrews origin, and some songs could fit this volume, but they are best considered in the context of the whole MS.

are in prose in smaller print with no indication of the division between the first and second half of sequential verses. In longer pieces, the English text spreads over a page-turn. I would have recommended that the translation should take the same line as the music, and that music page-turns should be the same as text.

The music is arranged in three periods: c.1150-1200 (nos. 1-18), c.1200-1250 (19-48) and c.1250-1300 (49-115). Many pieces come from isolated MSS with no particular reason for their presence. I suspect that likely performers will know the English texts, but less so the French and Latin. Personally, I'm happier with the Latin than Anglo-Norman French: I look forward to a variety of performances exploiting this new repertoire. Most of the songs are monophonic, though there are a few for two and for three voices, and, of course, one for six, which must be one of the most reproduced facsimiles available! The editor has not added any drones or other accompaniments which now seem wrong – or at least, are better not used too often. If singers want an accompaniment, they should work it out for themselves on the assumption that it was improvised. Similarly, rhythm can work in triple time if the music and words work thus – but don't emulate Notre-Dame mensuration rules.

The transcriptions are mostly in treble-tenor clef. No 18 is odd in that it has a compass from the G below middle C to the C an octave above middle C. This is from a group from Trinity College Oxford, MS 34, which is at least on the borderline with liturgical texts. The expert will want to check with the sources, many online: see p.164. But the variety of note shapes etc. are unlikely to reveal musical subtleties and often are written in quite idiosyncratic manners. This is a magnificent volume, revealing so much more than just the English repertoire.

## THE WHITE FALCON

**The White Falcon: A Song From Anne Boleyn's Coronation** Edited by Tamsin Lewis, With an Introduction by Lissa Chapman & Jay Venn. Rondo Publishing (RPo99), 2013. [12pp], £8.00 ISBN 979 0 708067 99 3

The words were written for the coronation pageantry of Anne Boleyn, with a street procession on 31 May 1533. It would be too much to expect the music to survive as well! So for a presence at the Lord Mayor's Show in November 2013, an attempt was made to match it to a song of the period. The chosen text was "And I war a maydn". I was surprised to see a five-voice setting, but my suspicions were false – it is the only five-voice item in the 109 songs of Henry VIII's MS (BL add. MS 31922).<sup>3</sup> This is used in

3. Edition by John Stevens: *Musica Britannica* 18, no 102. John's work on Tudor secular music was essentially done by 1960, and he was learning and teaching medieval French on the one-lesson-ahead method.

the edition, with repetitions of notes that work fairly consistently, which is more than one can say for the source song. John Stevens claimed that the third part held the tune: perhaps he thought that the sharp at the end of the first couplet was less plausible. But parts 1 & 3 work together in thirds and sixths, and it would sound well with two voices and instruments. However, the repeated three F-major chords in the second bar (split editorially to fit the new words) doesn't give the piece much of an opening impetus. The price is high – I reckon that four more copies of the music could be inserted on loose sheets as well.

### INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

*These editions were offered at the Early Music Exhibition last November, but I was rather busy that month.*

**Music from the Copenhagen Wind Collection III: 9 Pieces in 7 parts** Edited by Bernard Thomas. (The Renaissance Band, 16) London Pro Musica (LPM RB15), 2013. 42pp + 7 parts

The source is MS mus 1872 4° of Copenhagen's royal library, copied in the early 1540s. Music for seven parts is rare. By the time composers reached eight voices, the density could be eased by dividing into two choirs. The overall compass is basically from F4 to C1, though a couple of pieces have F3 bass clefs. Players have to be careful in dealing with dense, seven-part textures, though the listener (and performer) is helped by a chorale or chant. Well worth buying if you can manage to assemble the relevant forces (shawms or cornets and sackbuts, with some references to crumhorns). Clefs, as usual in LPM wind music, are only treble (at either octave) and bass. I spotted three misprints in the first paragraph of the introduction, but it seemed to improve later. I was intrigued when I first heard about this MS some 40 or more years ago: good that performance material is becoming available.

**Thomas Whythorne, London 1590 15 Duos for 2 treble cornets, edited by Timothy Roberts.** J. W. Publications (3 Horn Hall, Stanhope, Co. Durham, DL13 2JR) 47pp, £12.75.

Whythorne was an interesting man, and even from looking at the title pages of his two publications (*Songes a 3, 4 & 5*, 1571, and *Duos*, 1590). Peter Warlock published a biography in 1925, but Whythorne provided much biographical information in a collection his songs and poetry linked by autobiographical passages about his life and the situations which had led him to write each of the songs. The resulting book, entitled *Booke of songs and sonetts with longe discourses sett with them*, of around 1576 was discovered in 1955 and published in two versions (the author's spelling and modern orthography) in 1961 & 1962.

Whythorne's *Of duos, or songs for two voices* was published in three sections. The first contains 22 duos for a man and a child (or instruments), the third is a set of 15 canons (edited by Lynda Sayce: Sul Tasto, 1991). The middle section is "made for two children to sing. Also they be aptly made for two treble cornets to play or sound." (Elizabethan superfluous synonyms doesn't imply that

beginners make sounds for a while before their skills improve to the playing level!)

An interesting question is the clefs that the music requires. One expects C1 for non-virtuosic bicinia; in this set, most of the upper parts are C1, some of the lower parts are C2. The music itself fits within the limit of the stave, but tends to be unnecessarily low for a standard cornett: it would have been useful to have shown the compass of each part to facilitate non-cornettists using the edition. The duos have one- or two-flat signatures. Presumably, the cornetts (or children) were capable of transposing by sight and did not need the explicit transposition that modern players require. The children will have sung by the solmisation syllables, whereas cornettists might have managed by substitute clefs (eg no. 1, notated in two C2 clefs but played a fifth higher). At the time when cornetts was rare, the assumption was that their compass ran to two octaves above the A below middle C, and it is sensible to transpose pieces with bottom Gs up to a key used at the time (ie none, one or two flats). There are no words included for singers to use, but practising solmisation is a useful skill to acquire – an alternative would be to underlay comments on your rivals! The pieces may also have been played with other instruments. However performed, there is lots of practice for shaping the music without the benefit of texts.

**Consorts for Five, Book 4: A Collection of Consort Music for Viols** Compiled and edited by Alison Crum. Rondo Publishing (RP086), 2013. [viii] + 42pp + 7 parts, £7.50?

Unlike the previous item, parts here are given as alternatives: treble and alto for the 2<sup>nd</sup> part and alto and bass for the 4<sup>th</sup>, not that tenor trombonists are accustomed to alto clef (though no doubt Alison is!) There are a dozen pieces here, of which only three are fantasias – Coprario's *Cresce in voi* (no. 3. VdG no. 16), Mico (no. 6, VdG no.4) and Deering (no. 8, VdG no. 3). Two pieces are underlaid. No. 11 is Tye's *I lift my heat to thee*, probably familiar to singers, which may help sorting out the rhythmic patterns, though singers sometimes overdo it. Ferrabosco Senior's *Qui fundasti terram* is largely homophonic and is a fine example to take the option of playing from parts without bars. There are two isolated Pavans (Morley's *Sacred End* no. 1 & Deering's *Pavan* no. 7, VdG no 1) and two *Pavan-Galliard* pairs (Sommer nos.3-4, and anon nos 10-11, both from Hamburg 1607). Not many violists at their early stages will have encountered much of the music here: it is interesting and good value both musically and financially (though I've extrapolated the price from vol 2 to vol. 3).

**Weckmann Sonate à 3 e 4 istromenti, D-Lr KN207, Heft 14: 10 Sonatas for Violin, Cornettino, Trombone (or Viola da Gamba/ da Braccio), Bassoon (or Bombard) and Basso Continuo.** Performance Edition by Helen Roberts. Septenary Editions, 2013. 60pp + 5 parts, £20.00

I've played some of the Weckmann sonatas in the past, and was very impressed by them. The ten pieces are for two trebles (cornettino and violin) and two basses (trombone and fagotto, except that no. 9 has only the

latter, and no. 10 has just one bass instrument, a trombone that is mostly in the alto clef, but which occasionally uses the bass, down to the D nearly two octaves below middle C. Weckmann wrote for the Hamburg Collegium Musicum, established with Christoph Bernhard in 1660. The music is varied and often lively, with imitative phrases that often follow each other rather than overlap. The edition is less modernised than the other two items reviewed here. A C time-signature, for instance, has eight crotchets per bar and accidentals follow conventions of the period, though the notation itself can be ambiguous. In bar 9 of No. 1, for instance, there is a B flat on the cmt's first note. The note is repeated with one note between but with no accidental, but that is within the chord. The second crotchet beat moves from A minor to F and in the third beat the bass has F and the cmt has a B on the last semiquaver of the beat that I hope most players would flatten despite any notated flat. On the whole, such slips are usually obvious despite lack of notation. I think it's easier to read the score when playing keyboard if the continuo part is not barred through with the other four parts. The Bc is figured well enough to make a fair guess. I'm not convinced that black breves and semibreves in triple time are of any great significance – leave that for playing facsimiles!

#### MOTETS PLAIN OR EMBELLISHED

Bartolomeo Barbarino *Il secondo libro delli Motetti für Sopran (oder Tenor) & B. c. herausgegeben von Jolando Scarpa (Voce divina 23-4)*. Edition Walhall (EW 891 & 894) 2 vols, each with additional copy without cover, €28.50 each.

Barbarino was born around 1540 near Ancona and is first known as an alto at Loreto in the 1590s. He was in the Urbino till 1602 and organist at Pesaro Cathedral from 1602-5 and then worked at Padua. From 1608, he was a free-lance singer and chitarone-player in Venice and performed in the San Rocco celebrations. He published two sets of solo motets, the first in 1610 and the second, the one transcribed here, from 1614. This is particularly interesting because the vocal part (*Da cantarsi à voce solo ò un Soprano, ò in Tenore*) is printed on two staves – *semplice* and *passaggiato*. I haven't kept up with SPES facsimile over the last few years, and hadn't realised that this volume was issued in 2007 by SPES (€55.00). Modern editions tended earlier in SPES's history to be cheaper than modern editions. The two volumes are more or less the same price as the facsimile, but the former is economically justified by the duplicate copy. I do have doubts, however, in printing the music in modern typography but taking too seriously the original barlines. I'd comment more if I had the facsimile. How often are bar-lines present because they are at the ends of lines? How often are semibreves tied to minims because there is an editorial dash across the top line of each stave?

However, these two volumes are important. Each has 13 motets, followed by texts in Latin and German, which would be more convenient if each piece and text had a number. The score is set out with the embellished version on the top stave, the plain version on the second, and the

bass on the third. The continuo book contains the bass in normal size (quite large) with a smaller plain vocal line. The organist needs to be alert to follow the embellishments – good singers will try her or his own inventions, so it's better not to have to ignore the printed ornaments. There are no bass figures. Strangely, the volume first appeared with both voice parts, on facing pages, but no continuo, which appeared the following year along with a vocal stave which inconsistently included the plain or the adorned version. Highly recommended to students, but try other monodies of the first quarter of 17<sup>th</sup> century Italy as well.

#### PURCELL SERVICES

*Purcell Services, edited... by Margaret Laurie and Bruce Wood (The Works of Henry Purcell, vol. 23)* Stainer & Ball, 2013. xli + 212pp, £85.00

This contains primarily two sets of music for Anglican services. The Service in B flat (Z.230) contains ten items, though the four alternative settings (*Benedicite* and *Jubilate* for Matins, *Cantate Domino* and *Deus misereatur* for Evensong are separated in the MSS from the main set of *Te Deum* and *Benedictus* (Matins), *Responses of the Commandments and Creed* (Communion) and *Magnificat & Nunc dimittis* (Evensong). The set of six items is referred to as the *First Service*, the remaining four as the *Second Service*. The significant score was copied by William Isaack (Fitzwilliam MUS MS 117) around 1683, with alterations by various degrees of authority. The MSS parts were probably spread to most cathedrals and other churches with competent choirs, though were not necessarily preserved. Some of the parts seem to hint at earlier versions, but there is no authoritative source that makes preparing a definitive edition possible.

Particularly interesting is the relationship of Purcell's set and Blow's in G, which has a similar selection of items. A musical feature of both is the number of canons, which Purcell treats more elaborately, and the general consensus is that Purcell was a step beyond Blow. (For a Blow enthusiast like Bruce Wood to let that pass in a joint introduction must make the case!)

There are advantages in the original Purcell Society edition (1923). Is it really necessary for *Dec* and *Can* to be printed in full as *TREBLE DECANI* and *TREBLE CANTORIS* (p. 2 and p. 3 respectively)? 1923 prints the indications rather smaller, and includes them for each stave, which is clearer. The new edition has to label staves with the voice name, whereas in 1923, it was obvious from the clefs: however, it takes less space to head each stave as *S A T & B* (*S* before a stave doesn't necessary distinguish between soprano and trebles and having *Tr* and *T* is best avoided). I find the layout and clarity of the Z 231 in Robert King's *English Church Music* Vol. 2 (Oxford UP) preferable. The music setting is by Robert himself on Sibelius, and despite smaller pages, the result is far more comfortable to read, and will no doubt be used even if the new Purcell Society edition attributes the *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* in G minor to Daniel Purcell.

I suppose I must have heard the B flat service, but it didn't have much impact on me – the only period in which I sang liturgically was back in the 1960s, and wasn't very high-powered. The ceremonial *Te Deum & Jubilate* in D (Z. 232) is more outward-going, as was appropriate for the St Cecilia Day festival, premiered in St Bride's Fleet Street in 1694. It was performed annually at St Paul's Cathedral for the Sons of the Clergy until 1713, when it alternated with Handel's *Utrecht Te Deum & Jubilate*. Performance material has been available on and off since Eulenburg produced a miniature score, and I see that Oxford UP publishes a vocal score (again edited by Robert King) for £5.95. No doubt parts will be produced to fit the new edition. The 14 years between the two services is enormous, but that is influenced to some extent by the different function of the latter work.

A further *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis* (Z. 231) is relegated to an appendix, and the attribution to Henry Purcell is doubted: it is more likely to be by Daniel Purcell.

#### IN MEMORIAM PURCELL

*Odes on the Death of Henry Purcell* Edited by Alan Howard (Purcell Society Edition, Companion Series, 5) Stainer & Bell, 2013. xlii + 110pp, £75.00

This contains the well-known "An Ode on the Death of Mr. Henry Purcell... The Words by Mr. Dryden, and Sett to Musick by Dr. Blow... 1696". It was published in a modern edition by Walter Bergman and was widely circulated – at least, as widely circulated as it could be – by two countertenors. I first heard it around 1960 by Alfred and Mark Deller, and the opening range immediately made me wonder what sort of voice should be singing it, with a two-octave range from the D below middle C, but likely to have originally been sung a semitone or more lower. I find it extraordinary that the editor suggests the tenor voice but still prints the voice parts in treble clef, rather than an octave below, and names the parts countertenor: the original edition uses alto clef, to which high tenors will have been accustomed, but the term "countertenor" only occurs to specify "2d. Countertenor". The naming of instruments and voices is, apart from that, unnecessary. The recorders (headed "Flutes" in the original only on the opening page) need no further headings: their staves can be omitted when tacet since the difference between two recorders and two singers is patently obvious, (The Parley of Instruments recording of all the items in this edition has the Blow sung by Rogers Covey-Crump and Charles Daniels.)

The editor has examined 39 of the 41 known copies.<sup>4</sup> Considering the number, the commentary isn't very long, and the proportion of notes arising from the collation seems quite small. My copy is listed, but no-one asked about it. Some copies are bound with *Orpheus Britannicus*,

4. No-one answered when I asked recently whether there are easy ways of collation by superimposition of pages. I googled Hinman (he invented a machine in the 1940s which led to his study of Shakespeare's First Folio in 1963) and found a desktop equivalent: have any of our readers tried the Blink Comparator (by unclesam).

but mine is bound with Blow's *Amphion Anglicus* between the honorary poems and page 1. Facsimiles are available for £6.00. Peter Seymour has edited a more up-to-date edition which is in my catalogue but seems to have disappeared. I'll try to find out what has happened.

The word "Ode" is avoided when possible by the editor, since it usually refers to a text rather than to music. Odes generally (like the Pindarick Ode that ends the prefatory eulogies at the beginning of *Amphion Anglicus*) has certainly the complex verse structure, as does Blow's "Mark how the lark and linnet sing". I suspect that not all who have some awareness of the piece will actually remember the first line, and Jeremiah Clarke's "Come, come along for a dance and a song" definitely needs the title "A song compos'd by M<sup>r</sup> Jer: Clarke upon y<sup>e</sup> Death of y<sup>e</sup> Famous M<sup>r</sup> H : Purcell": the opening text hardly sounds appropriate! The scoring is large: 2 trumpet, timps, 2 oboes, strings and continuo. I was puzzled by the opening, with four separate echo bars (3, 6, 9 & 12) which the editor suggests may be for tenor oboe. If so, whether curtal or bassoon, a fourth reed wind should play the bass when appropriate (though apart from one note, the continuo part in the four bars mentioned above would double the tenor an octave lower, which seems odd). I suspect that the Countertenor Solo (bars 102-143) would definitely sound better with a tenor. Trumpets succeeded by recorders, each with strings, in a "very slow" tripla (3i) in D minor makes an impressive 28-bar introduction to the closing "All's untun'd" closing chorus, with a very quick change from recorders to oboes if the players are the same. However, one score provides blank staves for oboes, and it makes sense if the recorders transferred to oboes for 449 & 450 (on the economic understanding that oboes played recorders). This is the most substantial work here, and has a lengthy critical commentary, despite one score probably having been copied by William Croft (copied between 1714 and his death in 1727). The other MS was copied by R.J. S. Stevens a century later.<sup>5</sup>

D minor is the characteristic key of the volume, matching the Blow and half the Clark; the recorders, of course, have implications of the other world (whether classical or Christian). Henry Hall (older readers will remember "Tonight is my guest night") contributed a shorter piece for Shepherd (S) and Shepherdess (B) with two recorders and continuo. It would make a good programme if the Blow alto/tenors could manage the middle parts for a quartet (Monteverdi's *Lamento della ninfa*, for instance – though perhaps a semitone or more above) and the recorders play a couple of trios. The volume ends with a four-part string "Farewell" by Finger in four parts in G minor.

This is the sort of repertoire that is likely to be performed by musicians with some understanding of rhythmic notation of the period. It really does look odd to have time signatures translated to 4/4 and 3/1, though at least the note-values are not changed. And there is no need to add long underlay slurs, as in "song" on p. 1, bar 14. The

5. This MS is at the British Library, but I associate Stevens more with the Royal Academy of Music, which I catalogued in the late 1960s. Much of his library came from Handel's singer (treble then bass) Savage.

introduction is excellent and the poems are notated in full and set out in the style of the period.

PS. *Early Music* XLI/3 (August 2013, arriving on 4 Jan 2014) contains a relevant review by Alan Howard of Mark Ellis: *A chord in time: the evolution of the augmented sixth from Monteverdi to Mahler* (I wish authors would describe their subject without generic titles), Ashgate, 2010 — Howard plays the same game with his title “Your murd’re peace destroy”. Ellis undervalued the use of augmented sixths in late 17th-century England, and Howard proves ample examples of uses by, for instance, Blow and Purcell. My reaction is that the clash exists by adding emotion to a cadence or other progression by including a flat and a sharp as appoggiaturas or passing notes: using the devise to excess is probably overdoing it. Normally, the continuo player can choose between sharpening a natural or flattening one. For particular attention the player can do both. This does not need to be given a formal description, but it can be carried into notated figures or parts without having to use such terms as augmented sixth. There's a good example in the last half-bar of Dido's “Thy hand, Belinda” (no. 37 in my edition) where a 7/3 (above an E flat) is figured “6” in the usually-authoritative MS (Bodleian... Tenbury 1266) whereas Tatton Park MS MR 2-5, 3 has “#6”. (I must add a footnote!) Several examples exist in Jeremiah Clark's “Come, come along for a dance”.

#### ENGLISH BAROQUE SONGS

**Jeremiah Clarke** *Fifteen songs...* Edited and reconstructed by Timothy Roberts. Green Man Press (Cla 1), 2013. 43pp + extra score with unrealised continuo, £10.00.

**English Baroque Songs — II** ... Edited by Timothy Roberts. Green Man Press (EBS 2 M), 2013. 26pp + extra score with unrealised continuo, £7.90

**English Baroque Songs — III** ... Edited by Timothy Roberts. Green Man Press (EBS 3 M), 2013. 27pp + extra score with unrealised continuo, £7.90

As I wrote in the previous issue, I had read or played through the music but only managed to write about it at the last minute. There were several mistakes in the reference abbreviations and the prices, which somehow got confused. My apologies. I hope no further error has replaced the corrections.

#### CHRISTMAS MASS

**Michael Corrette** *Messe pour le temps de Noel...* (Voce Divina 25) Edition Walhall (EW 696), 2013. [vi] + 18 pp + 2 copies without cover, €17.50

The source is *Quatre messes à deux voix égales avec l'accompagnement de l'orgue à l'usage des dames religieuses mêlées de solo, duo et choeurs qui peuvent aussi se chanter par les hautes-contre et tailles*, published in Paris the year before the Revolution. The conclusion “Domine salvum fac regnum” would no doubt have soon been embarrassing, and one couldn't include it in a liturgical performance now — but it's OK in a concert performance. The music itself, the last of the four masses, has the attraction of 18th-century

Christmas music based on noëls. The mass can be sung by two voices, but the score has sections headed *Chœur*, so there's no need to assume that only two soloists are preferable, which the modern title implies. Not all two-voice sections are indicated as *soli* or *tutti*, but it seems sensible for the choir to be used in homophonic sections. The Kyrie has nine sections, in ABA layout. There is no creed. The organist has a right hand written out when the voices are silent, but otherwise plays from a figured bass. Organ interludes can be supplied from settings by Corrette himself or others. My library is too disordered to check whether there is any consistency of association in the placing of melodies in Noël masses: I'd be interested to hear if there is.

#### EDITION WALHALL

**Sainte-Colombe** *Pour la Basse* and other recent items will be reviewed by Robert Oliver in the April issue.

**Vivaldi: Cello Concerto no 22** in a (RV 419) — but please use RV numbers: there are enough different numerations for Vivaldi already, and the only exception (which isn't relevant for cello concertos) is the original opus numbers. This is a lively piece, with the opening ritornello mostly alternating crotchet beats with a pair of quavers leaping octaves and four adjacent semiquavers: Vivaldi's openings are often memorable. The Andante (cello & Bc) is relaxed. The finale is an 8-note ground, perhaps archaic, but with the second violin playing repeated demisemiquavers whenever the cello isn't, this is a very lively piece. (EW 883, €15.50 — presumably for score only) We seem not to have priced our edition, probably £6 for the score and £2.00 per part, though that is likely to go up. Unusually, our edition is more spacious than Walhall.

**Vivaldi: Cello Concerto no. 27** in b (RV 424) is not so lively and unlike RV 419 the opening movement's first solo section has semiquavers, semiquaver triplets and a appoggiatura attached to sq sq q. The second and third cello solo has repeating quavers as backing. The Largo is more impressive than RV 419 and the Allegro, as in the other two movements, has inclinations above the normal top comfort zone for the period. (EW 887; €16.50)



## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

Brian Robins, Brian Clark, Clifford Bartlett

## THE EARLY MUSIC REVIVAL IN ENGLAND

Nick Wilson *The art of Re-enchantment: Making Early Music in the Modern Age*. Oxford UP, 2013. xiii + 293pp, £16.99 ISBN 978 0 19 993993 0

In the past twenty years or so there have been a number of books tracing the development of the modern early music revival and issues raised by it, notable among them Harry Haskell's *The Early Music Revival: A History* (1988), *Authenticity and Early Music*, ed. Nicholas Kenyon (1988), Bruce Haynes' brilliant *The End of Early Music*, its teasing title causing a flurry of ruffled feathers at the time of its publication in 2007, and most controversially of all, the collection of Richard Taruskin's articles published as *Text and Act* (1995).

The newest entry to the field takes a rather different approach in several respects. First, Nick Wilson restricts his survey to the early music 'movement' in the UK, a decision that results in providing only an oblique view of such pioneers as Harnoncourt and Leonhardt, while the major role played by Sigiswald Kuijken in such matters as violin technique is ignored. It could also be thought ill advised to have adopted such an insular approach at a time when the focus of some of the most important activity in the field has shifted away from Britain to mainland Europe, especially France and Italy. This concentration also results in a failure to note the major role played by British artists such as Nicholas McGegan (mentioned only for starting the RCM's postgraduate programme) in mainland Europe and the USA.

More disconcertingly still, Wilson, a lecturer in creativity and arts management at King's College, London, has interleaved his narrative with passages and even whole chapters (Chap 3) of discursive, densely opaque philosophical argument peppered with often arcane references, sometimes to quotations of no more than two words. I must leave others better qualified in the discipline to consider the merits of much of Wilson's argument, but having doggedly waded through acres of inelegant writing, I find it difficult to escape the conclusion that there is much here that is pretentious, irrelevant and weighed down by tautology. Far too often generalised assertions like the opening of Chapter 7 (where Wilson tells us, 'Knowledge, whether of a musicological, historical, creative, entrepreneurial, artful or performance related kind, is fundamental to early music') fall into the context of classic examples of what the less scholarly term a 'statement of the bleedin' obvious'. Unlike most in the early music world today, the author is obsessed with the word 'authenticity' or more accurately 'authenticities' (the word has five entries in the index, with 42 sub-headings), in particular in relation to Taruskin's charges against the

early music movement's adherence to the purity of the written note, the concept of 'Werktreue'. The principle of 'the work', let alone Werktreue, is of course a misnomer across acres of early music, especially in the minefield of opera (a genre barely touched upon by Wilson). Because it exists in a carefully prepared and detailed contemporary score, we might legitimately (though with caveats) consider Monteverdi's *Orfeo* to be a musical 'work'. But his *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* is manifestly not 'a work'. The fragmentary existence – in the sense of musical information as well as literally in this case – of such an opera makes it impossible to determine or produce what would constitute an 'Urtext' or musical 'work'. Wilson's suggestion that a musical work becomes a musical work only if it is not only composed but also performed, discussed and written about is therefore surely a suspect legacy of 19th century thinking, since contrary to his assertion, a previously unperformed opera by, say, Cavalli has never ceased to 'exist', even though its physical existence is restricted to a partial score that cannot be performed without the input of an editor, whose efforts will still not produce 'a work', since other possibilities exist. [See comment on this paragraph at the end of the review CB]

A great strength of the survey of the development of the early music scene in Britain is Wilson's consideration of the whole spectrum, concerning himself not just with artists but the interlinked phalanx of instrument manufacturers, editors and publishers (including generous – and well-deserved – praise for CB), record companies and business. Even those of us who have been there from the start and think we know a fair amount about the early music world will find much of interest in the anecdotes and reminiscences of those at the sharp end of administering early music, frequently the directors of ensembles, who have had to accumulate business knowledge in addition to artistic skills in an arena where state funding has played little or no part. Wilson quite rightly lays much of the credit for the impetus of the revival at the door of Michael Morrow and David Munrow (who, it seems, had little time for each other), but he seems unaware that the reason for the subsequent decline of interest in much of their chosen repertoire can be attributed not so much to the absence of these charismatic figures, but the limitations of a repertoire which, unlike that of the medieval and Renaissance vocal ensembles that continue to thrive, conspicuously lacked music of substance. Indeed, as Wilson notes, at the time of his tragic death, Munrow had recognised this and was preparing a move forward into the Baroque [and also to move back to Josquin masses CB]. Otherwise, it is a weakness of Wilson's appraisal that his over-dependence on artists he has interviewed results in significant lacunae: there is no place for mention of Lina Lalandi's influential English Bach Festival, which did so much to introduce the operas

of Handel and Rameau (not to mention Baroque dance) to audiences, splendid pioneering work particularly fondly remembered now that the ENO and others have seen fit to return the production of such operas to the dark ages; no recognition of the huge significance of Kent Opera's revolutionary staging of the Monteverdi trilogy; and equally no recognition of the heroic part played by Peter Holman in the revival of English 17th- and 18th- century music. Individual artists who will every reason to feel aggrieved that the substantial part they have played is not acknowledged include Paul McCreesh and Philip Pickett.

In general, Wilson is happy to follow the familiar evolutionary path in the development of the modern early music revival, which might be typified by Eliot Gardiner's original cautious approach to the adoption of period instruments, which, as an anecdote of CB recalls (p. 164), was not going to happen for him 'until the players are technically good enough'. In fact, despite what we are told by lazy critics, what we have arrived at today is not a nirvana that can look smugly back on the 1970s as some kind of Neolithic age in the development of historical performance practice. Wilson, who very rightly hails the achievements of those who over nearly 50 years have brought a new way of looking at early music, is also prepared to admit that there is still much to be done, though without necessarily saying what. Among many things he might have mentioned that early music has *not* achieved (and not only in Britain) can be included the acceptance among all but a very few to recognise that there is no universal Baroque way of setting up and playing strings (Wilson himself consistently refers to an all-embracing generic method of Baroque string playing); a disinclination to recognise the critical importance of training in the art of extemporisation; and the continuing lack of ability among a large majority of singers to perform a proper trill. Research is much needed on such questions as appropriate pitch and the effect it has on performance, appropriate performance space, appropriate performing numbers, tempo – where the current mania for very fast contrasted with very slow is almost certainly extremely un-HIP – and so forth.

As I've tried to convey, *The art of Re-enchantment* is a complex, at times frustratingly indigestible book. Anyone involved with or interested in early music in Britain will most likely want to see it, for they will certainly find much that is enlightening. Whether or not they will want to devour it whole is quite another matter. Brian Robins

*My feeling is that a Cavalli opera needed the input of a "creative" editor in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to fill out the instrumentation, but I trust that the current musicological activities regarding Cavalli (which also relate to late Monteverdi) will return to Urtext scores that need the usual editorial accuracy but don't need additional instrumentation. By the standard of that paragraph, surely the wantonly irrelevant stagings we regularly see in operas of all periods make it impossible to describe the concept of an opera as a "work", unless I have misunderstood the paragraph. But ignoring that, there are still remarkably few operas that need additional instrumentation – continuo realisations are, of course, not now written out. CB*

## ITALIAN MUSICAL TERMS

Fiamma Nicolodi, Renato di Benedetto, Fabio Rossi  
*Lemmario del lessico della letteratura musicale italiana (1490-1950)* (Filologia e Ordinatori, xvi) Franco Cedati, 2012. 990pp.

*LesMu: Lessico della letteratura musicale italiana 1490-1950* a cura di Fiamma Nicolodi e Paolo Trovato... 990pp, €100.00. ISBN 978 88 7667 451 8 *Users Manual and Bibliography with a CD-ROM... [Bilingual]* Franco Cesati, 2007. 167pp. ISBN 978 88 7667 342 9

This publication consists of not one but two books, the second of which is essentially a guide to using the CD-ROM that accompanies it (in a soft plastic case glued to the inside of the back cover). Indeed, it is the CD that was the core of the original project and which contains even more information than the book. The guide is printed with Italian and English information in adjoining columns. Unfortunately neither CB nor I have been able to access the database of illustrations (from 2007) – despite following the instructions at the rear of the main volume (which supposedly would overcome compatibility problems, and is dated 2012), my computers refused to open the software, although I was able to access the illustrations directly from the disc - not much use, though, when they are simply allocated numerical names with no reference to the original documents.

So that is the major grouse out of the way. If you have ever wanted to know what a particular musical term meant at a particular point in time (in some part of Italy), then this might be the book for you. There are almost 1000 pages from *abbassamento* on page 11 to *zufolo* on page 987, sometimes giving multiple references to terms in literally dozens lexica. After the term itself comes a definition, the details of the source cited, then the actual text. I found myself wondering what the purpose of the definition was - surely all I need is the actual text and I can draw my own conclusions. This was compounded when I took a closer look at that final entry - the definition says that it was "a wind instrument identifiable (in the 18th century) with the 'ciamello' [presumably what we call chalumeau, but there is no entry in this book to confirm that] or 'oboe pastorale' [whatever that might be]", but the actual text (from a *Discorso sull'armonia* from 1750-60) spells the name *zuffolo* and makes no reference to the instrument's origin - a quick google led to definitions and images of a flute-like instrument. Purely by chance, I then looked at the first Z entry, the Italian word for bagpipes. Except, in the original text (from 1544), the spelling is *sampogne* – there is no entry in the book for such an expression (not even a cross reference), suggesting that anyone working on early material will first have to consider the possibility that the term you do not understand might have changed orthographically over time. Of course, the book is a down-sized version of the database and these issues may be solved by being able to do word searches, but it does seem to me an ill-judgment of non-native speakers' needs and unnecessarily intrusive - could the headwords not have incorporated such alternative spellings, especially given the historical nature of the material?

Of course this was a mammoth undertaking and I am sure that the volume and computer material will be widely used in Italian libraries. I should have thought it would have been much wiser to make it available online. Indeed, one librarian's review I read online criticized the cost, especially when so much material is available on the net - if you search for *Saggi musicali italiani*, you will find complete searchable texts of many early books, arranged by century. Searching for *zufolo* will return a negative result, but you will find Zarlino talking about the *zuffolo*...

Brian Clark

JOHN MARSH

The John Marsh Journals *The Life and Times of a Gentleman Composer, 1752 – 1828*. Vol. II edited, introduced, and annotated by Brian Robins (The Sociology and Social History of Music, 10) Pendragon Press, 2013. xii + 429pp, £65.50

Marsh was a musical enthusiast. In the provincial world of Salisbury, Canterbury and, from 1787, Chichester, he spent a considerable amount of time involved in musical activities' often mixing professional and amateur players – though the present use of the words doesn't quite fit. Marsh was probably of professional ability, but was of adequate wealth to perform without a fee. My recollection of vol. I is that Salisbury was more in touch with London than was the less significant city of Chichester. But there was a extensive musical life, which Marsh recorded. His "History of My Private Life" ran to 6,704 MS pages. The first section ended on 11 June 1802 when he was 50 – this is covered in Vol I. Vol II carried on until 15 October 1828: he died on 31 October. The two editions concentrate primarily on musical activities, with extensive footnotes. There are also interesting contemporary illustrations, but sadly no portrait of Marsh survives.

Most of the information is about who the composers and performers were, but short on reasons for selecting programmes or evaluation pieces. Handel still features large, despite his music being from the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century – it does seem a bit pedantic to list the date of such distant works. Marsh was a considerable composer, and was capable of playing a voluntary at a cathedral or bringing along a canticle and accompanying it. On 14 May 1803, for instance, he "went to Westm'r Abbey at 12. & played my bro'r Will'ms double Chant in A." On the next day, "the senior minor canon at St Paul's, desiring him to put up my Morning & Communion Service in D, which, with my Sanctus for 3 trebles, was accordingly done & went off very well considering it had been rehears'd by the boys alone." In fact, the St Paul's organ was rather a difficult beast, so he only played the Sanctus, but later in the day played the final voluntary back at Westminster Abbey. I presume cathedrals are a bit more organised now. He was a prolific composer: 39 symphonies, 15 concertos, 11 strings quartets, 6 string trios, a large number of organ

1. I was tempted to refer to his diaries as enthusiastic, though readers of the time might have thought he was somewhat methodistical: the two volumes edited by Brian are selected primarily for Marsh's musical activities.

voluntaries and four pages listing vocal music. By no means all of this survives. There is also a page listing magazine contributions and two pages of index of musical & literary works I find the book fascinating to read in short doses or to dip into.

The effort Brian Robins has put into this project is enormous: he selected the text, added the footnotes and assembled the lists and indexes. It is hardly a book to summarise: it is a massive account of what could be considered routine. Marsh loves the music, though is limited in what he can say about how music is described. Diaries must be rare now. Congratulations to the author and the editor for so fascinating an account of musical activities in Chichester and occasionally London. CB

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#### EUBO in Salford on the Early Music Show

A PS to the London Reviews (pp. 13-16)

I wouldn't normally review concerts 'off-air', but have just listened to the Early Music Show broadcast (19 Jan) of a concert given by the European Union Baroque Orchestra (EUBO) in Salford in December 2013 – a concert given just before their final concert of this year's incarnation of EUBO in York. I would have loved to have been at either of these concerts, if only to hear the young German flautist Anna Freitag, a player who amazed me when I heard her play last year in Leipzig. I wrote then that hers was "some of the most musically sensitive playing that I have heard from any musician on any instrument". Hearing her again on Radio 3 reinforced that view. She plays with an extraordinary attention to the detail of the little motifs that are the building blocks of baroque melodic line, using subtly varied tonguing, articulation and stresses, producing a melodic line that is brimming with musical life. In the broadcast, this was most evident in her interpretation of Leclair's Concerto for Flute in C major (op.7/3). The minute delicacy of her added ornaments and flourishes and her exquisite sense of time and space was a delight, most notably in the extended written out cadenza of the central *Adagio*.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

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Andrew Benson-Wilson's popular little book 'The Performance of Early Organ Music' has been out of print for many years, but has now been reprinted. Email Andrew at [ajbw@hotmail.com](mailto:ajbw@hotmail.com) for ordering details. [It was seeing Andrew's little book that led to his writing for EMR. CB]

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## THE STEFFANI PROJECT

Peter Holman

*The Steffani Project* Cecilia Bartoli, Diego Fasolis with Philippe Jaroussky, Franco Fagioli, Daniel Behle, Julian Prégardien, Salve Vitale, Nuria Rial, Yetzabel Arias Fernandez, Elena Carzaniga, Coro della Radiotelevisione svizzera, I Barocchisti

Decca 478 5827 (228' 21")

Disc 1: MISSION Excerpts from the operas

Disc 2: Danze e Ouvertures

Disc 3: Stabat mater + sacred works

Agostino Steffani (1654-1728) belongs to that select group of 17th- and 18-century composers who were much more famous in their lifetimes than they are today, even after more than a century of the early music movement. Part of the problem is that he was cosmopolitan and peripatetic: he came from the Veneto, was educated in Munich, Rome and Paris, and worked in Hanover, Brussels and Düsseldorf, causing 20th-century musicologists with nationalist agendas to ignore him. He also wrote vocal rather than instrumental music (though of course there is a good deal of orchestral music in his operas), so he has not been taken up in modern times by those running or catering for Baroque instrumental groups. Most important, perhaps, he offends against anachronistic notions of the divide between the amateur and the professional in music of the time: he was a Catholic priest, worked as a diplomat and ended up a bishop – so the English reader will inevitably recall Handel's supposed jibe about the Rev William Felton: 'a barson make concerto! – why he no make sarmon!'. In fact, Steffani was thoroughly trained as a musician (he studied with Johann Kaspar Kerll and Ercole Bernabei, both followers of Carissimi), and was clearly a highly accomplished, inventive and innovative composer, at home in a wide range of idioms and styles. Those coming to his music for the first time will hear fascinating echoes of Cavalli, Carissimi, Muffat, Lully, Alessandro Scarlatti and Handel, among others.

*The Steffani Project* (Decca 478 5827) is a three-CD box featuring Cecilia Bartoli and other solo singers with I Barocchisti and the Coro della Radiotelevisione Svizzera directed by Diego Fasolis. Much of the box is taken up with *Mission*, a CD of vocal excerpts from Steffani's operas featuring Bartoli with occasional contributions from the countertenor Philippe Jaroussky and the choir, which comes in a pouch at the back of the cover of a 166-page tri-lingual book. There are also two CDs in conventional jewel-cases: *Danze e ouvertures*, an anthology of orchestral sections from the operas, and *Stabat Mater*, a collection of his sacred music consisting of the *Stabat Mater*, two psalm settings and four motets. There has been a certain amount of hullabaloo in the media about *Mission* and its connection with *The Jewels of Paradise*, a thriller by Donna Leon about Steffani and a Venetian musicologist investigating his life. I have not read *The Jewels of Paradise*, though novels about early music are clearly fashionable at the

moment (witness Donald Greig's *Time Will Tell*, about Ockeghem, an American musicologist and an English early music group), and it may explain some of the bizarre features of the packaging of *Mission*. Why, for instance, Bartoli appears in photos as a bald Catholic priest (shades of Sinead O'Connor!); why it is suggested in the notes that Steffani was a castrato; or why there are constant references to the 'mystery' of his life.

In fact, as Colin Timms demonstrates in his fine book *Polymath of the Baroque: Agostino Steffani and his Music* (Oxford, 2003), Steffani's life, far from being a mystery, must be one of the best-documented of any composer before Handel: beside Timms's book there is another, Claudia Kaufold's *Ein Musiker als Diplomat: Abbé Agostino Steffani in hannoverschen Diensten (1688-1703)* (Bielefeld, 1997), about his diplomatic activities for Hanover. The packaging of *Mission* is certainly a triumph of style over substance. With all the guff about the 'mystery' of Steffani's life there was clearly no room for detailed notes about the individual pieces, something that is sorely needed since the operas will be unfamiliar to virtually everyone, and to appreciate the excerpts properly we need to know something about the dramatic situations and the compositional context. Luckily, the notes for the other two CDs are all by Colin Timms and are excellent. I am still trying to work out whether the fact that the cover of my copy of *Mission* is on back-to-front is part of the 'mystery' or was just an error in the factory!

Turning to the music and the performances, it is good to have recordings of a substantial cross-section of music from Steffani's operas, though I cannot help thinking that the money, time and effort devoted to the CDs of operatic excerpts would have been better spent in recording a work complete; so far as I can discover, only three of his sixteen operas have been recorded: *Alario il Baltha* (1687), *Niobe, regina di Tebe* (1688) and *Orlando generoso* (1691), though there is a CD of the one-act 'divertimento' *La lotta d'Hercole con Acheloo* (1689), and at one time there was a single LP of extracts from *Henrico Leone* (1689); details of recordings can be found at <http://www.newolde.com/steffani.htm>. The problem with the 'bleeding chunks' recorded on *Mission* is that we can get little idea of Steffani as a dramatic composer since we cannot hear how he responds to and develops dramatic situations, how he contrasts and balances a sequence of musical numbers, or how he builds up and articulates large-scale musical structures. The same is true of all of those CDs of arias from Handel's operas and oratorios made by well-known or aspiring singers as 'calling cards', though in his case at least we can now hear virtually all the operas more or less complete on CD.

In the case of *Danze e ouvertures*, the CD of orchestral excerpts from the operas, it is a pity that the opportunity was not taken to record several of the extended suites

published by Roger in Amsterdam in 1706 as *Sonate da camera a tre, due violini, alto e basso*, since they may have been selected and ordered from the operas by Steffani himself; there is a good modern edition edited by Lino Pizzolato (Venice, 1996). They would have been more coherent than the selection recorded here, which juxtaposes pieces from operas of different periods in a rather random fashion. *Sonate da camera* omits wind parts, as does a parallel collection, Purcell's *Ayres ... for the Theatre* of 1697, but they could easily be restored from the MS full scores. *Stabat mater* is the most coherent of the three CDs, and is a most valuable addition to the Steffani discography. The main work, the *Stabat Mater* for six voices (performed here with the choir taking the *tutti*s), six-part strings and continuo has been recorded several times before, but it is a masterpiece that deserves to be much better known, and the other six sacred pieces (all apparently first recordings) are all worth hearing. Among them is the splendid 'Qui diligit Mariam' for five voices (also mostly sung chorally here) and continuo. Like the *Stabat Mater*, Steffani sent it to the Academy of Ancient Music in London shortly before his death, and possibly composed it especially for the Academy.

I have criticised the concept and choice of material for *The Steffani Project*, though there is much to enjoy on these three CDs. The orchestra is vigorous and polished, and the choir makes a strong, blended sound – a far cry from the rather anaemic ensemble I remember from some old Monteverdi LPs. Most people, of course, will buy *The Steffani Project* because of Cecilia Bartoli, and she certainly throws herself into her solos with abandon, deploying considerable virtuosity where required, with corresponding subtlety in the more reflective opera arias. As we might expect, she is very good at creating a memorable atmosphere to project the affect of the words and the music, and there is no doubting her absolute commitment to bringing Steffani's music vividly alive. The main problem is that, for my taste, her voice is just too dark in tone, vibrato-laden, and at times high pressure to be convincing in 17th-century music, particularly in the sacred music. In the *Stabat Mater* she has to sing simple contrapuntal lines, often in ensemble with singers who have considerably lighter and straighter voices than she does. Nevertheless, Fasolis produces a strong and dramatic performance of the work, much more exciting and convincing than the rather stodgy one recorded many years ago by Gustav Leonhardt; I have not heard the one by The Sixteen (COR16076).

In *Mission* what comes across most strongly, apart from the superb quality of most of arias chosen, is the stylistic variety of the music. Steffani mostly used Italianate idioms for his arias (though he often cast them in French dance rhythms, as Handel and other composers of Italian opera did), but they range in style from the archaic ('Ogni core può sperar' from *Servio Tullio* (1686), based on a modulating version of the *ciaccona* in the idiom of Cavalli or Cesti) to the very modern ('Sposa, mancar mi sento' from *Tassilone* (1709), with its Handelian oboe obbligato and searching chromatic harmonies). Another element in the stylistic mix, characteristically German though derived

in part from French practice, is the colourful use of obbligato instruments, including trumpets, oboes, recorders and even a consort of four viols behind the scenes in the beautiful recitative and aria 'Dell' alma stanca' and 'Sfere amiche' from *Niobe*, which combines and contrasts with the main orchestra of recorders, strings and continuo, producing the most sensuous effects.

This aria, along with a few of the others recorded here, is available in print, in the old anthology of operatic excerpts published by Adolf Sandberger in *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Bayern* (<http://conquest.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/f/fc/IMSLP240415-PMLP389121-Steffani - Selected Works.pdf>). From this we can see that it was recorded more or less as Steffani wrote it (with the irritating addition of little jingling bells making the allusion to the harmony of the spheres in the text rather too overt), though elsewhere Sandberger's edition shows that Fasolis and Bartoli have played fast and loose. One aria is sung up an octave, while in 'Ogni core può sperar' Pluhar-like 'orchestrated' continuo riffs are added at the beginning and end, and oboes are added to the string parts – anachronistic for an opera written in the 1680s, before the instrument arrived in Germany. I strongly suspect that the wind parts in some of the other arias are additions. In general, there is too much percussion for my taste (in one aria the drums illustrating a monster almost drown out poor Steffani's attempts to portray it in the orchestra), and there is the common problem of an overprominent herd of strumming and riffing continuo players, with the anachronistic use of an organ in one number.

In *Danze e ouvertures* the 'mystery' is confined to its strange macaronic title, giving the misleading impression that Steffani's dances are Italianate; like the overtures, they are mostly French in style, or at least in that Francophile style produced by the group of German composers often collectively called *Les Lullistes*. With this CD it is easier to keep tabs on what Fasolis does to the music because Sandberger included many of the overtures in his anthology, and we have modern editions of the suites in *Sonate da camera* as well as some one-off editions such as Brian Clark's *Prima la Musica* publication of a suite from *La lotta d'Hercole con Acheloo*; see [http://www.primalamusica.com/contents/en-k/dr29\\_Page\\_129.html](http://www.primalamusica.com/contents/en-k/dr29_Page_129.html). In addition, when I was reviewing Colin Timms's book I made detailed notes about the scoring of a number of Steffani's operas from the manuscript scores in the British Library. From all this it seems that Steffani wrote for a French-style orchestra in most of his Hanover operas, with a single violin part and two violas (the second parts are written in the soprano clef and are sometimes labelled *haucontre*), with *basses de violon* on the bass line. Unfortunately, Fasolis uses a normal eighteenth-century string section with two violins, violas, cellos and double bass. Also, his frequent use of a one-to-a-part string group contrasted with the full orchestra is not called for by Steffani, though it is undoubtedly effective in places.

As with *Mission*, Fasolis cannot resist touting up the scoring with additional recorder and oboe parts, with overactive continuo playing, and worst of all, with the frequent

addition of percussion, with even a drum and a tambourine added to the overture to *I trionfi del fato* (1695). By the end of the CD I was tired of all the strumming, twiddling and banging, and wished that the continuo and percussion players would just stop and let the rest of the orchestra get on with it. After all, as with French operas of the period, we cannot assume that continuo instruments even played in the dances of operas in Hanover, and so far as I know there is little or no evidence for the use of unpitched percussion in Steffani's operas, or in any orchestral music from around 1700, for that matter.

This is a pity, since Steffani was a most imaginative and innovative composer for the orchestra and I Barocchisti play with plenty of virtuosity, energy and refinement, with Fasolis generally choosing sensible tempos. Among the most memorable pieces recorded here are the overtures to *Niobe*, with its unexpected and electrifying entry of four trumpets and timpani in the middle of the fugue (I remember it almost propelling me out of my seat during the performance at Covent Garden in 2010), and *Amor vien dal destino* (1709), in which the chorus joins the repeat of the fugue – a trick also used by Purcell in his first court ode, 'Welcome, Vicegerent of the mighty King'. Another striking piece is 'Les Ombres' from *I trionfi del*

*fato*, with its sombre textures and eloquent pauses, reminiscent of similar pieces by Lully, Charpentier and other French composers. But there is so much fine music among the relatively conventional overtures and dances recorded here that it seems invidious to single out particular pieces. Steffani's orchestral music can easily stand comparison with the suites of Georg Muffat (I kept hearing echoes of movements from *Armonico tributo* and the *Florilegium* collections), or for that matter those taken from the theatre works of Lully, Charpentier and Purcell, which should be recommendation enough for most people.

For all its faults, *The Steffani Project* will probably do more to revive the composer than all the combined efforts of earlier performers and musicologists, and for that Bartoli and Fasolis deserve the heartfelt thanks of everyone interested in his music. What we need now are new performing editions – it seems extraordinary, for instance, that so fine a piece as 'Qui diligit Mariam' still seems to be unpublished – and new recordings, particularly of complete operas, that bring alive Steffani's extraordinarily bold and refined vocal and orchestral writing without tarting it up.

*I am grateful to Colin Timms for reading a draft of this article, and for making some valuable suggestions.*

**Steffani *Niobe* (excerpt from *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Bayern* xxiii (1912))**

**Atto Iº Scena XIII.**

*Regio Museo che ostenta la Reggia dell'Armonia.*

*I Cembali a le Teorbe tucciano tutta la scena.*

*In scena nascosti.*  
Viola.

*In scena nascosti.*  
Viola.

*Nell' orchestra.*

*ANFIONE.*

Dell'alma stanca a radolcir le tempre, Ca . ria . si . li di pace, ca . ria . si . li di Bassi.

## LONDON REVIEWS

Andrew Benson-Wilson

## More than a little weird

English National Opera have been running Nicholas Hytner's much-loved *Magic Flute* for the nearly 25 years, so a new production is perhaps overdue. The trend today is for operatic co-operations, with Netherlands Opera, Aix-en-Provence and Complicite being the partners in the new production by Complicite's director Simon McBurney. In contrast to the previous production, this *Magic Flute* is dark, mysterious and more than a little weird. A flood of ideas drenched the stage, aided by a commentator sitting in a box in the corner, chalking up comments onto a large video screen. But there seems, at least to me, on first sight, little coherence to link it all together. Masonic references are played down, but the element of cult is still stressed through colour-coded camps in conflict. Most of Mozart's roles are given present-day characterisations, including Monostatos as an old-style East End gangster. Hungarian conductor Gergely Madaras, in his ENO debut, had the orchestra raised from the pit to become an integral part of the action, notably through flautist Katie Bedford and celeste player Soojeong Joo who gave excellent cameo performances on stage. I wasn't so convinced with Madaras's direction though, his rather erratic sense of pulse being just one issue. He also pushed the singers well beyond their comfort zone, with the inevitable effect on tone. It may well be that, in 25 years time, I will miss this production. But, in the meantime, it will certainly take me some time to get used to it.

## An English GoldenAge

As Associate Artists of the Barbican Centre, the Academy of Ancient Music have gained access to the new Milton Court concert hall, a far more suitable space for their more intimate programmes, such as 'An English Golden Age', featuring the music of Locke, Purcell, Arne and Handel (21 November). Locke's dramatic and evocative incidental music from *The Tempest* (1674) opened the programme, the widely contrasted movements given a gutsy reading by the AAM. The delightful soprano Anna Prohaska then sang three Purcell solo songs, accompanied on an enormous and very loud harpsichord by Richard Egarr. I will forgive her occasional tendency to swoop for the sheer delight of her sensitive interpretations, notably of 'Tell me, some pitying angel'. Her use of rhetoric to accent emotive moments was spot on, as were her heart-wrenching cries of "Gabriel" – which also revealed one of those moments when silence can be more intense than music. Given the power and resonance of the harpsichord, the continuo realisation of 'Music for a while' could have been a great deal simpler. I assume the harpsichord was chosen for William Babel's addition of a sequence of harpsichord solos role to Handel's *Vo'far Guerra* from

*Rinaldo*, possibly based on Handel's own improvisations. Anna Prohaska also sang selections from *The Fairy Queen*, the delicacy of her voice in sharp contrast to some rather bombastic playing from the band. They are possibly not yet used to the Milton Court acoustics. Although the sequence of Handel works that concluded the concert must have helped to attract the sell-out audience, it would have been good to have heard some other 18<sup>th</sup> century English composers.

## Van Wilder reborn

I heard the choir Cantores performing music by Philip van Wilder (c.1500-1553) back in 2006. Recording company mishaps have meant that the resulting CD has only just come out (see CD reviews). The launch concert (26 November) took place in van Wilder's own parish church, St Olave, Hart Street, where his tomb survived until the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War (along with that of Pepys). Although his music is not well-known today, he was Henry VIII's favourite musician, bringing with him the influence of Josquin and Gombert and their ilk and influencing the likes of Tallis and Byrd. The concert followed the order of the CD, but omitted most of the other composers that influenced or were influenced by van Wilder. The rousing (but liturgically out-of-place) opening fanfare was his *Ita missa est/Deo gratias* an extraordinary (and tiny) outburst of voices piling on top of each other that would have sent the most depressed person skipping out at the end of a Mass. A central selection of van Wilder's chansons demonstrated the international nature of his musical influence – a fine example of the benefits of Henry VIII's policy of encouraging immigration. Cantores, directed by David Allinson, are a group of friends stemming from student days in Exeter. They sang with a refreshingly straightforward directness, producing an impressive sound that I would like to think is possibly more in line with the singing of van Wilder's time than the many highly professional choirs we are so used to hearing today. David Allinson's introductions to the music were excellent.

*Good that van Wilder's music is being revived: see also AB-W's CD review on p. 18). For years he was a one-piece man: Je file was quite commonly sung and played in the mid-1960s.* CB

## Casualty in context

The *a cappella* vocal group Exaudi continued their concerts combining ancient and modern in their concert '*O tenebroso giono: Gesualdo then and now*' (Wigmore Hall, 6 November). Slotted between the Gesualdo pieces were UK premieres of pieces by Stefano Gervasoni, Michael Finnissy, Christopher Fox and Johannes Schöllhorn. This is an enterprising and important project

for Exaudi's director James Weeks. His programme note was an informative reflection on Gesualdo's music and our varying ways of trying to understand it. I have praised Exaudi before, but on this occasion I was less impressed with their singing, notably because of (mostly) soprano vibrato. Although I am not a lover of excessive vibrato in any early music context, I think that in madrigals, and in Gesualdo in particular, the devastating effect that vibrato has on intonation and pitch is just too disturbing. Exaudi are not the first group to have this reaction from me, and won't be the last. But, whatever I might think, the audience seemed to like it. And James Weeks is a very persuasive commentator and master of ceremonies.

### Strange harmony of love

Another contribution towards understanding Gesualdo took place in Islington's Union Chapel, one of the most glorious buildings in London, and recently resurrected from near demolition. Now better known as a music venue than a Congregational church, its extraordinary atmosphere and acoustic have attracted performers from rock groups to the likes of I Fagiolini. They were early users of the Chapel and recently returned with their 'Strange harmony of love: Renaissance music of sweet and strange beauty'. Their programme set the music of Gesualdo into the wider context of the music of the time, with pieces by Monteverdi, Lassus, De Wert, Luzzaschi, Fantanelli, Marenzio and a brief look in from Tomkins and Weelkes. Robert Hollingworth's programme notes explored Gesualdo's use of chromaticism and harmonic shifts and the influences on him, and of him on fellow composers. The slithery harmonies in De Wert's *Vox in Rama* and Luzzaschi's *Ahi, cruda sorte mia* were compared with the collapsing harmonic blanmange of Gesualdo's *Ecco, morirò dunque!* The six singers were on very good form, with excellent tuning (something highlighted in the programme note, and very evident in some beautifully pure cadences) although, perhaps inevitably, I felt there was occasionally rather too much vibrato from the soprano.

### "A Pianistic Partnership"

Robert Levin is a regular contributor to Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment concerts, but he doesn't usually bring his wife and former student, Ya-Fei Chuang, on stage with him. But at their Queen Elizabeth Hall concert (28 Nov), the pair played Mendelssohn's Concerto in Ab for Two Pianos (MWV06) and Schubert's Fantasy in f for piano duet (D940). The concert was broadcast live on Radio 3, so I also listened again on iPlayer, if only to check whether my impressions of the live concert were apparent – they were! Mendelssohn's Concerto, written when he was 15, was worth hearing, but perhaps only once – it is not a major work. But I was distracted by the extraordinary contrast between the playing of Levin and Chuang. Levin seemed to go out of his way to dominate proceedings, both visually, with gleefully boyish (by which I mean immature) glances around the orchestra, leaps to his feet, trying to take the directorial hot seat away from

director/leader Margaret Faultless, and aurally, with playing that was far too loud and aggressive. In complete contrast, Ya-Fei Chuang was delicate, sensitive and musical, and refused to be bullied into submission by her husband. And good for her – hers was the approach that suited the music and acoustic far more than Levin's hacking away. The later duet (obviously played on the same fortepiano) made it clear that the two fortepianos used for the concerto were well matched, so there is no excuse on the volume issue. And, to be fair, they played more as a team in the duet, which was also a better piece. Meanwhile, in their opening Beethoven Coriolan Overture and closing Symphony 8, the OAE showed how well they perform without a conductor under the leadership of Margaret Faultless. Although they might have been moments when togetherness might have been bettered, the concept of performing as a team of equals is at the heart of the OAE.

### An alternative OAE sandwich filling

A week later (3 Dec), the OAE brought the Beethoven bread from the sandwich of the QEH concert to The Anvil, Basingstoke, but replaced the pianistic filling with Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto and Mozart's Horn Concerto 4 – a possible populist nod to the expected audience. The latter featured their own principal horn player Roger Montgomery, giving an outstanding performance, as step-out OAE soloists so often do when playing in front of friends. I fear the Anvil audience were probably not used to hearing a period horn, so had little understanding of the technical and musical issues involved, otherwise their applause would have been far more enthusiastic. But I would rather have the colourful fisted notes and complex tuning of a period instrument than a bland modern alternative. Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto is not a work I would normally hurry to hear, but I was keen to hear Isabelle Faust. Her interpretation was sensitive and considered, and, like Roger Montgomery avoided any sense of showpersonship.

### Spitalfields Music Winter Festival La Serenissima

The usual Spitalfields eclectic musical mix included concerts by The English Concert and The Sixteen alongside experimental and jazz music and community projects. I got to two of the concerts, starting with La Serenissima's Vivaldi concert 'A Tale of Two Seasons' in St Leonard's Shoreditch (6 Dec), a regular venue for Spitalfields concerts nowadays. The 'Two Seasons' were nothing to do with the Four Seasons, but referred to the change in Vivaldi's music between the operatic seasons 1717 and 1733. The programme was the same as their CD of the same name, with Sally Bruce-Payne singing extracts from the 1717 operas *Arsilda* and *L'incoronazione di Daio*, and *Motezuma* (1733). She was immediately revelling in the dramatic scale passages in *Io sento in questo seno*, demonstrating beautifully clear articulation. The 1717 section finished with the complex *Il grosso Mogul* Concerto, with its enormous cadenza passages, here played with a forceful and strongly rhetorical

interpretation by Adrian Chandler, the percussive sound of fingers on fingerboard being audible from well back in the audience. More successful were the slow movements of the Concertos RV 367 and 191 in the 1733 section, the added ornaments well integrated into the lilting melodic line.

### The Hilliard Ensemble

The Hilliard Ensemble started their 40<sup>th</sup> (and final) year with a birthday party, gathering eight of the nine singers that have been part of the Hilliard story – the current line-up of David James, Steven Harrold, Rogers Covey-Crump and Gordon Jones, two other founder members (along with David James) Paul Elliott and Errol Girdlestone, and other past members, John Nixon and John Potter (St Leonard's Shoreditch, 11 Dec). Only founder member Paul Hillier was missing. Their programme reflected their wide ranging repertoire over the years, the only surprising omission being anything by Arvo Pärt. The first half was particularly well-constructed and appropriate for the season. The rhythmic complexity of Pérotin's lively *Viderunt omnes* was followed by verses from Victoria's *Magnificat secundi toni*, alternatively running into the great Advent plainchant sequence of O Antiphons. Polyphonic pieces by Josquin, from the Codex Speciálnik (the lively motet *Exordium quadruplate*) and by Pomponio Nenna (his lovely *O magnum mysterium/Ave Maria* revealing more than a hint of Gesualdo) completed the first half, sung by the four present Hilliard members. As well as Byrd and Sheppard, the second half included a piece sung at their very first concert (40 years ago to the day), Britten's 'Canticle IV: Journey of the Magi', with Errol Girdlestone playing the piano, as he did in the original format of the group, with three singers and a pianist. The Hilliard's commitment to contemporary music was evident in their concluding commissioned piece, Roger Marsh's 'Poor Yorick', based on Sterne's 1759 'Tristram Shandy'. The decision to disband, rather than continue as a commercial brand, is understandable and sensible. Although most of this concert was sung beautifully, there were occasions when some of the voices seemed about ready to put their feet up. They have a busy year of international touring ahead, culminating in a final concert in December.

### Sir Elton John's organ

Over the past year, students at the Royal Academy of Music have been encouraged, in programme notes for their concerts, to make a special mention of Sir Elton John's organ. Said organ (built by Orgelbau Kuhn from near Zurich), and now with the name of percussionist Ray Cooper added (he and Elton John, both ex-Academy students, gave the proceeds of a couple of concerts towards the cost of the instrument), was recently opened in the RAM's Dukes Hall. It took me a while to get over the shock of realising that the takings from a couple of Elton John concerts would cover the enormous cost of a substantial new organ – my own musical direction has clearly been misplaced. I went to the opening recital, and wasn't particularly impressed. It is an eclectic organ, with a teaching focus covering the entire organ repertoire (but

with slight French symphonic focus), and rather sounded like it, with no real integrity in any one style. But then, in the second of two concerts at the end of the Kings Place Bach Unwrapped, the German organist and renown teacher, Wolfgang Zerer, gave an all-Bach recital with an Advent theme (8 December). And suddenly the organ sounded very different. With his restrained registrations and meticulous articulation, Zerer gave an exquisite demonstration of just how to play Bach.

### Charpentier at Christmas

Perhaps best known for his *Messe de Minuit*, Charpentier's other main contribution to the Christmas repertoire, his brief oratorio *In Nativitatem Domini Nostri Jesu Christi Canticum*, formed the climax of the first half on the concert given by Theatre of the Ayre (Wigmore Hall, 12 Dec). The oratorio's links to the French tradition of *Noëls* were reinforced by preceding it with sung and instrumental pieces and Charpentier's *Noëls pour les instruments*. But the meat of the programme looked forward to spring with a performance of the chamber opera *Actéon*, like *In Nativitatem Domini*, composed while he was composer to the Duchess of Guise. Of the key singers, Paul Agnew (*Actéon*) stood out with his exquisite *haute-contre* voice (a voice-type rarely heard from English singers) and his sensitive inflections of tone. I was also very impressed with the young mezzo Anna Starushkevych. Elizabeth Kenny directed from behind her theorbo with commendable restraint. The instruments included Clare Salaman playing the hurdy gurdy, bringing an exotic and bucolic sound to the first half. However, if you want to be able to tune up in relative peace and quiet, then including a hurdy gurdy is perhaps not a good idea – as soon as she started to tune, the hall was filled with an excited hubbub.

### St John's, Smith Square Christmas Festival

The annual St John's, Smith Square Christmas Festival started for me with a fascinating concert from Oxford Baroque (14 Dec) that placed the E-flat Christmas version of Bach's *Magnificat* into what might have been a contemporary Leipzig Christmas Vespers setting. We know that Bach had access to a large library of music when he arrived in Leipzig in 1723, so it was entirely appropriate to feature several such pieces in the context of the *Magnificat*, composed half-way through Bach's first year there. The motets came from the 1618 *Florilegium Portense*, the chorales from Vopelius's 1682 *Das Neu Leipzig Gesangbuch*. Organ preludes were by Buxtehude, Bach and Weckmann – the whole of his four-movement *Magnificat primi toni*, a magnificent piece, played brilliantly by Christian Wilson, but unlikely to have been played by Bach as a choral prelude, or as the introduction to a Vespers service. The cantata was the festive *Uns ist ein Kind geboren*, still identified as BWV 142, but long assumed to be by Bach's predecessor Kuhnau. The soloists that impressed the most were David Lee in his agile and well-articulated reading of *Deposuit potentes*, and Amy Lyddon's delightful *Esurientes implevit*, with a neatly-timed little plonk at the end as the rich were sent away devoid of the company of the two recorder players. The choir were

generally effective, and often excellent, although one of the sopranos had far too much vibrato, sang far too loudly and spent too much time presenting to the audience with the demeanour of a soloist rather than a member of a choir. There were fine contributions from Joel Raymond, oboe, Oonagh Lee and Pippa Ovenden, recorders, and Christian Wilson, playing the large St John's organ. I particularly liked his final voluntary, Bach's youthful *Indulci jubilo* played with the freshness and vitality of a young Bach, rather than with the sombre grandeur that we are used to from the conclusion of King's College Christmas Eve Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. Jeremy Summerly was an undemonstrative conductor, perhaps too much so – I got the impression that there was not quite enough time for rehearsal as there were frequent moments when the participants did not quite know what to do next.

#### “Don’t panic”

The programme by the eight singers of The Cardinall's Musick (20 Dec), regulars at the SJSS Christmas Festival, was built around Angels and Archangels, referred to as “celestial postmen” in Andrew Carwood's programme note. The first half alternated Victoria's *Missa O magnum mysterium* with different versions of the Christmas Vespers Magnificat Antiphon *Hodie Christus natus est*. The joyous pealing bells of Palestrina's opening *Hodie* contrasted with the rather austere polyphony of Victoria's *Kyrie*, a mood continued with Sweelinck's version. The mass movements demonstrated Andrew Carwood's excellent control of the build up of rhythmic energy within the overall *tactus*. After some anonymous angels, the rather more eclectic second half introduced some angelic names, with pieces by Poulenc and Tippett (the tightly intertwined lines of his *Plebs angelica*, introduced by Andrew Carwood, in his stentorian ‘head of a minor public school’ tones, with a “don’t panic”). Palestrina gave us *Venit Michael Archangelus*, while Dering showed Michael taking time off from singing Hosannas for a bit of dragon slaying. A plainsong Litany (each line initially intoned by a different member of the choir) was a rather desperate plea for practically everybody in heaven to “pray for us” sinners, including Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, all the holy angels, archangels, all holy orders of blessed spirits and, for good measure, Christ – that should do the trick. Isaac's concluding *Angeli, Archangeli* was in similar vein, with the addition of thrones and dominations, principalities and powers, cherubim and seraphim, patriarchs and prophets, holy doctors, apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, hermits and all the saints and elect. The Cardinall's Musick are approaching their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, but still sound fresh and vibrant.

#### The Divine Incarnation

The Brabant Ensemble built their programme, ‘The Divine Incarnation’, on the *Missa super Doulce mémoire* and two motets by Cipriano de Rore, alongside seasonal pieces by Lassus, Loiset Piéton, Brumel, Clemens non Papa and Victoria (SJSS 21 Dec). As well as the obvious meaning, the concert title also referred to the fact that both de Rore and

Lassus were described by their contemporaries as *il divino*. Loiset Piéton was probably the least known of the composers, but the inclusion of his pieces in Attaingnant anthologies suggests that he was well thought of at the time. His *O beata infanthia* is a complex bit of 6-part knitting, with a pleasing sense of ebb and flow and some nice moments of *ficta*. The earliest piece came from Antoine Brumel, his frequently bouncy *Nato canunt omnia* set more in the late Medieval style than the Renaissance. It has an extraordinary penultimate chord. The Mass setting was exquisite, and beautifully sung, notably the meditative and harmonically slow moving *Sanctus*. De Rore's *Fratres: Scitote* was similarly impressive, not least for the fact that it is possibly the only known example of the text of the Last Supper being set to music. Normally only spoken by a priest, this setting may have been intended for private devotion. This was an outstanding concert, well directed by Stephen Rice and with some extremely impressive singing, notably from the three pure-toned sopranos. Finally, if any of the performers are reading this – if your mother was sitting in seat K4, can I suggest that you buy her a quieter camera, or perhaps hint that she doesn't take quite so many noisy photographs during the concert.

#### The inevitable *Messiah*

And so to the inevitable *Messiah*, this time from the Academy of Ancient Music (Barbican, 17 Dec), proving that size isn't everything. A choir of 21 with 22 players formed a compact group in the centre of the wide Barbican stage. The home-grown soloists Iestyn Davies, Jeremy Ovenden and Brindley Sherratt were joined by German soprano Lydia Teuscher, somebody I had not heard before. Although not devoid of vibrato, she maintained an enviable clarity and perfect intonation and demonstrated the rare ability to produce a perfect trill – something also achieved by the choir sopranos at the end of ‘His yoke is easy’. The chorus sounded fresh and alert on what must have been one of the busiest weeks of the year for them. The conductor was the Canadian Bernard Labadie, with his natural, elegant and physically expressive style and evident attention to the solo singers. In solos with continuo he just started them off and then stood aside – something I like from conductors. His control of the build up of chorus tension was exemplary, always leaving something in reserve. He kept the pace crisp, but always within the bounds of overall clarity, and was adept at guiding the audience through the middle bit that nobody remembers because it has no famous bits. The audience were rather scrappy in their one solo moment, their Hallelujah stand up being something of a Mexican wave started by a sole male in the far right hand corner, with around 90% of the audience joining in. The things we do to annoy Americans! Before the start of the second half, Iestyn Davies was awarded the 2013 Critics' Circle Award for Exceptional Young Talent (voice).

AB-W had added a review of an EUBO broadcast, but for better layout it has been separated to page 9. CB

## CD REVIEWS

## MEDIEVAL

**Landini The Second Circle Love Songs of Ars Nova Fiorentina** Anonymous 4 61' 32" hmGold HMG507269

The Anonymous 4 ladies provoke one of two reactions, in my experience – an enthusiastic 'the sound of heaven' or a screwed-up face 'very boring'. Their sound is very beautiful – carefully tuned, carefully paced, very together – but after two or three tracks it does become very 'samey'. I got a lot from this by listening to a maximum of three tracks at once and following the words, and it's lovely as background, but eventually I did yearn for an earthier approach to some of the songs. However, the disc (first released in 2001) continues to have great documentary value as one of less than a handful dedicated exclusively to the composer and for its thorough documentation.

David Hansell

**Conductus 2: Music & Poetry from the Thirteenth-Century France.** John Potter, Christopher O'Gorman, Rogers Covey-Crump 70' 45" Hyperion CDA67998

This is the second of three discs, with a variety of experts whose research is producing fresh performing ideas. The three tenors (about as far as you can get from the operatic Three Tenors) no doubt contribute to what works, based on the background scholars. The booklet is clear and highly informative and readable, undermining most of what I learnt in the 1960s. The rhythm varies from explicit modal notation to unmeasured regularity, with all the variations in between. Theory has often been worked out on paper, but the interaction among the subsidised project "Cantum pulchriorem invenire" is more widespread. I don't know if I'm unusual, but even though my Latin is rusty, the texts of the conductus have a shape that the translation cannot match (as with the Latin texts in MB 96 – see p. 2). The variety of styles is refreshing, and I hope even non-Latinists will enjoy the music and words. The texts are printed and translated, but need enlarging! You can, though, listen to the tunes with satisfaction.

Despite criticism, this is an interesting performance, well performed in its way; the concept seems some decades ago, but the individual items sound well – but more singing is needed. I suspect that players would normally have made up their own music without notation, not got involved with liturgical codices.

CB  
I hoped to comment further on the Codice di Guardiagrele facsimiles (see next column), but it would have been too elaborate and time-consuming.

clearly designed for unaccompanied solo voices and performed thus on this recording. There is a final motet, too, also in seven parts and evidently intended to cap the cycle, in which Christ reproaches mankind from the Cross.

It is only the subtle division into groups of four, later three, madrigals (plus motet) that articulates the sequence. Each group is in a particular mode, with Lassus extending the limited range of the modes' theoretical transpositions by deploying high, stet and low clef formations: the only example known to me of all three within a single work – and this at a time when 'low' clefs (normally requiring upward transposition of a fourth) were on the verge of falling out of use. Certainly we have here a triumphant display of scholastic mastery by the aged composer, but the shifts from mode to mode make a calculated musical effect, even to our uneducated modern ears, producing a freshness and variety that is only partly dependent on the differing vocal ranges called for: standard (for the period) in the stet-clef items, slightly lower with high clefs, slightly higher with low clefs.

By no means all recordings observe the intended transpositions, but Gallicantus get them right. Yet to my ears their performances lack the passionate expressiveness that is surely called for as Lassus responds to the endless changes that Tansillo so effortlessly rings on the themes of gazing, tears, betrayal and bitter regret. The falsettist singers on the two highest parts sound particularly buttoned-up to my ears, and though Gabriel Crouch allows himself a degree of madrigalian latitude in matters of dynamic and, vitally, tempo, he never quite goes far enough to avoid a prevailing feeling of English reserve and (the great danger with this, of all cycles) sameness. A worthy addition to the considerable stock of *Lagrime* recordings, then, but perhaps not the one to make the rest redundant.

Hugh Keyte

**Lassus Lagrime di San Pietro** Gallicantus, Gabriel Crouch 53' 21" Signum Classics SIGCD339

I cannot recall ever hearing an entirely satisfactory performance of Lassus's swan-song, composed a few weeks before his death. This succession of twenty spiritual madrigals, masterly settings of devotional poems selected from a longer but never-completed set by Luigi Tansillo, is classic *musica reservata*, designed to be listened to with close attention by the musical cognoscenti – in this case no doubt Duke Wilhelm of Bavaria, Lassus's long-term employer and close friend. Each eight-line stanza has the same ABABABCC rhyme-scheme, and each setting is in seven parts,

**I Codice di Guardiagrele: I Corali di S. Maria Maggiore, sec XIV.** De Bon Parole, Marco Giacintucco 63'34"

I must confess that I had never heard of Guardiagrele (in Abruzzo). At the period the music comes from, Abruzzo was a trade centre, particularly for wool. The MSS on which the recording is based

**Ludford Missa Dominica A Lady mass for Herny VIII** Ensemble Scandicus Pierre Verany PV71311

As far as I am aware, this is the first recording of a Ludford Lady Mass. Seven survive, one for each day of the week; they are, unusually for 16th-century England, scored in three parts, for triplex, medius and contratenor and, equally unusually, include alternatim polyphony for both the Ordinary (with Kyrie) and the Propers of the mass. Ensemble Scandicus and their musical directors have clearly taken great care over this project. They perform the

music transposed down a fifth, for ATB, and also sing *faburdyn*, provided by Jérémie Couleau, in many of the monodic sections (try the second Kyrie for a taste). Ensemble and tuning are good, and Ludford's fluent and graceful counterpoint comes across strongly. Well worth exploring – one hopes that further days in the cycle will follow! *Alastair Harper*

**John Sheppard Sacred Choral Music** Choir of St Mary's Cathedral Edinburgh, Duncan Ferguson 68' 59"  
Delphian DCD 34123

*Adesto sancta Trinitas II, Gaude virgo Christopher, Hodie nobis caelorum rex, Libera nos I & II, Missa Cantata, Paschal Kyrie, Sacris solemniis, Verbum caro*

In the wake of their CDs of music by Bruckner, Taverner and Gabriel Jackson, this latest recording from the St Mary's Cathedral Choir Edinburgh and their dynamic young director will also raise a few eyebrows. Their approach to Sheppard is uncompromising, and the impetuosity of youth infuses these readings with an infectious urgency and excitement. If occasionally an older listener like me would wish them to linger a little longer over a favourite phrase or to treat an inspired passage with a fraction more delicacy, the cumulative excitement generated by their more cavalier approach is undeniable. At the end of generally superbly solo sections the full choir fairly jumps back again as if straining at the leash, and the same after the beautifully rendered chant episodes. There is no doubt either that this is a superb choir which sings accurately, with a full tone and with enormous enthusiasm. The mixed gender treble section is beautifully blended and contributes a succession of fine and accomplished soloists to the reduced forces passages, which are also superlatively sung by the adult soloists. The distantly placed solo episode in *Hodie nobis caelorum Rex* is an absolute delight. Another incidental treat is the inspired use of *faburden* in response to the high placing of the plainchant in the alternate verses of *Sacris solemniis* – the choir sounding as if this is a favourite trick they regularly pull out of their sleeves. Much of the unfamiliar repertoire comes from the latest volume of *EECM* edited by Magnus Williamson and all the music is sung 'at pitch', so not upwardly transposed alla Wulstan. This makes an enormous difference to the musicality of these performances and surely points the way to the likes of The Sixteen and The Tallis Scholars, still inexplicably navigating the interstellar regions. Indeed such groups have a lot to learn from the pent-up energy in these engaging and thrilling performances, and I would thoroughly recommend this CD to anyone who has not yet sampled the work of Duncan

Ferguson and his remarkable young choristers. *D. James Ross*

**Philip van Wilder Complete Sacred Music; Chansons** Cantores, David Allinson, dir.

Toccata Classics TOCC 0198 76' 50"  
*Amour me poingi, Amy souffrez, Aspice Domine, Blessed art thou that fearest God, Homo quidam, Ite missa est/Deo gratias, Je file quand Dieu me donne de quoy, Non est qui/Non nobis Domine, Pater Noster, O doux regard, P our vous aymer, Sancte Deus, Shall I despair, Vidi civitatem*  
**Byrd Aspice Domine, If in thine heart, Ne irascaris; Causton Turn thou us; Gombert Amy souffrez; Josquin Homo quidam; Tallis Blessed are those that be undefined, O sacrum convivium, Sancte Deus**

Although recorded in 2006, this CD has only just seen the light of day, but it has been worth the wait. Apart from bringing a fascinating composer to the fore, David Allinson's scholarly programme notes are an important contribution to the history of English music. As well as the surviving works of van Wilder, this CD includes eight pieces by Byrd, Causton, Gombert, Josquin, Tallis, that directly influenced (or were influenced by) van Wilder's music. His music is generally relatively straightforward in its rhythmic and harmonic structure, and shows his willingness to adapt to the English style. Cantores started life as a student choir at Exeter University in 1999 and continue as a group of like-minded friends – a refreshing change from the top-flight professional choirs. They produce a very attractive, clean and unaffected sound, with commendably clear diction. This is clearly something of a labour of love for David Allinson, and he directs with an obvious passion. I recommend this CD for the music, the singing, and the historical relevance. A review of the CD launch concert is elsewhere in this issue.

*Andrew Benson-Wilson*

**Zarlino Modulationes sex vocum (1566)**

Singer Pur 68' 41"  
Oehms Classics OC 873

The music is impressive, but I'm puzzled at the words: even with the text at hand, it is difficult to hear them, especially with a cantus firmus as well; but the sound of the music impresses. I was hoping to get a review copy from A-R editions, but either it isn't published yet or I'm out of favour, and the only item in this collection I could find is in *Das Chorwerk*, vol. 77 (google IMSLP Zarlino), *Misereris omnium Deum* for four voices C<sub>3</sub>, C<sub>4</sub>, F<sub>3</sub>, F<sub>5</sub> with a canonic cantus firmus *Ne remeniscaris Domine* in F<sub>3</sub> and a fifth higher. The Quintus repeats *Miserere mei Deus* on E+B E B E+B E B E+ [ + indicates the E above middle C]. I feel more comfortable having seen at least one piece. They are mostly looking back to Willaert and further to Josquin and are rather solemn. But they

warm on several hearings, and relate to Zarlino's theoretical work. I look forward to the edition, but meanwhile hope that the CD will circulate. *CB*

**Il Cor Tristo** The Hilliard Consort 53' 13"

ECM Records 481 0637

Madrigals by Arcadelt & Pisano + 40th anniversary commission by Roger Marsh

It is astonishing to think that this CD has been issued to celebrate both the 40th anniversary of the Hilliard Ensemble and a final year, the group's intention being to disband at the end of an intensive year of activity during the course of 2014. The Hilliards will always occupy a special place in my musical experience. During the 1980s the intimate little festival mounted by the ensemble in Lewes not only introduced so much music previously unknown to me, but allowed audiences to hear at close hand artists of the stature of Jordi Savall and Montserrat Figueras, who, I've always imagined, must have come to Lewes for little more than small change. The personnel has, of course, changed since those days (though David James and Rogers Covey-Crump remain), but one thing that has remained constant is the innovative programming that has always been a feature of Hilliard concerts and recordings. It is highly appropriate, then, that the new disc includes not only Petrarch settings by Arcadelt and the rarely-heard Bernardo Pisano (1490-1548), but, occupying the most substantial portion of the disc, *Il Cor Tristo*, by the contemporary British composer Roger Marsh. Commissioned by the Hilliards in 2008, it has a text taken from Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The chant-like parlano that is its principal musical component is woven closely to the text, being largely homophonic, with solo passages occasionally emerging from the texture, often for direct speech. The remarkable final section, 'Ugolino' takes on a mesmerizing, nightmarish quality, all achieved across a narrow, quiet dynamic range. It's a compelling piece that remains etched in the memory after the final words, 'We passed onward...' have faded away; I look forward to making closer acquaintance with it. Both the Marsh and the Renaissance pieces are performed with that blend of total assurance and insight that comes only with long performance experience. Grateful thanks for four decades of memories, Hilliards past and present!

*Brian Robins*

**La Quinta essentia** Huelgas-Ensemble, Paul Van Nevel 77' 19"

Harmonia Mundi HMG 501922

*Ashewell Missa "Ave Maria" Lassus Missa "Tous les regretz" Palestrina Missa Ut re mi fa sol la*

I'm not normally a fan of straight-through Renaissance mass performances or record-

ings but I was captivated by both this programme and the rich-toned performances which benefit from a near-perfect acoustic. The director characterises the composers as representing strict classical counterpoint (Palestrina), the ripe fruit of the Franco-Flemish renaissance (Lassus) and flamboyant English Gothic (Ashewell) and delivers singing to match. The greatest interest is the music of Ashewell, who is of the Eton Choir Book generation and style and who held posts at Tattershall College, Lincoln Cathedral and Durham Cathedral. His *Missa Ave Maria* (half his known output) is alone worth the price of the disc (originally released 2007).

David Hansell

*Remember me my deir: Jacobean songs of love and loss* Fires of Love (Frances Cooper S, Marcus Claridge perc, Gordon Ferries lute & 4-course ren guitar, Jonathan Hugh-Jones recs, lute, bar 62' 02")

Delphian DCD34129

This latest release from the Scottish-based early music ensemble the Fires of Love explores the music of the reign of James VI of Scotland and I of the United Kingdom. We have a bewildering range of Scottish and English music here, and the performers even manage to draw in Shakespeare. A rather sketchy programme note by Jonathan Hugh-Jones – too often he resorts to the cop-out phrase 'we have to make half-informed guesses' – seems to propose the thesis that, as it is the more traditional music of Scotland which was to dominate the next century, this is the sort of music that should be explored here and juxtaposed with more 'serious' English music. The result is that the treasury of fine Scottish partsongs and consort songs of the late 16th and 17th centuries is largely passed over and all we are given here are Alexander Montgomerie's *Adeu O desie of Delyte* and *Quhat mightie motione*, the former with simplified strumming harmonies rather than the original fine part-writing. *Remember me my deir* from the reign of Mary is curiously presented as an unaccompanied melody and then an instrumental variation. Beside this token and slightly mangled representation of courtly song, the regional lute books of the later 17th-century with their transcriptions of bardic material are heavily represented. The result is a curiously unbalanced picture of the Scottish component of the programme. My feeling is that there are potentially three CDs here – one genuinely exploring the Scottish courtly music of first part of the 17th century, another looking at the very distinct world of the Scottish lute manuscripts and possibly a third exploring music in England during the reign of James I. Having said that, Gordon Ferries' lute and guitar playing is charming, as is

Frances Cooper's soprano voice – she makes some attempt at Renaissance Scots although her English is uncompromisingly and incongruously modern. Some of the recorder and percussion contributions, particularly to the lute tunes sound a bit contrived, but the playing is generally pleasant.

D. James Ross

*The Voice of the Turtle: Davy, Sheppard, Mundy* The Sixteen, Harry Christophers CORO 82802 16111926 70' 58"  
*Davy Ah mine heart, O Domine caeli; Mundy Adolescentulus sum ego, Vox patris caelestis; Sheppard Gaude Maria, In manus tua I & III, Libera nos I & II*

The programme is dominated by a large-scale work by each composer. The earliest is by Richard Davy (c.1465-c.1521 or perhaps 1538) from the Eton Choirbook, which states that he composed it in a day at Magdalen College, Oxford, which implies it was written in 1490-92. I doubt if many people could copy out five parts of 263 bars (bar numbers as in *Musica Britannica* vol. II) in a day! The shorter pieces by Sheppard (c.1515-1558/9) are naturally heard more often – 50 years ago, they were barely heard at all. It is so satisfying listening to these long pieces, and not many amateur singers will have experienced them personally. The texts of all three are surprising and imaginative, especially Munday's (c.1530-before 1591). Works that run continually for over 14 minutes (17'37" for Munday) need to be listened to in a different way from other English music of the period. My inclination is to vary the running orders: the existing pattern is fine, but I would probably prefer shorter groups (the composers separately, for instance). As for the performance, I would slightly prefer the Sixteen (i.e. 18 and a conductor) to have just a fraction more edge, but it doesn't worry me. If you can, go to one of the 30 performances of the music on the disc, preferably one of the smaller churches: but there's a fair chance that the music will easily take precedence over the music in most lofty cathedrals.

CB

(feasibly!) to more than one composer. So not all the sonatas on this excellent CD may actually be by Bertali – other candidates are David Pohle and Samuel Capricornus (those of us who edit or play this music will not be disappointed, of course, for we know them to be equally interesting and capable composers). Fans of quartets for violin, cornetto, dulcian and trombone with continuo will love the three works here, and none of the other six pieces will disappoint. I recently had a ridiculous email from a violinist claiming that Bertali "wasn't as good a composer as Biber" – I shall recommend he listens to Le Concert Brisé and reconsider his stance. BC

**William Brade and Thomas Simpson**  
*Taffel Consort* Weser-Renaissance Bremen  
 Manfred Cordes, 72'  
 CPO 999 952-2

It's good that groups are beginning to take an interest in William Brade and Thomas Simpson. They were the most important composers among a number of English musicians who spent their lives in northern Germany and Scandinavia in the decades either side of 1600, popularising there the distinctive idioms of English consort dance music, particularly five-part pavans and galliards. In time a distinctive mixed 'Anglo-German' style developed, also incorporating elements of Italian canzonas, English masque music and French dances. On this CD there are pieces taken from three of Brade's collections, the five-part *Neue ausserlesene Paduanen, Galliarden, Canzonen...* (Hamburg, 1609), the six-part *Neue ausserlesene Paduanen und Galliarden* (Hamburg, 1614), and the five-part *Neue lustige Volten, Couranten, Balletten...* (Hamburg, 1621), together with the so-called 'Coral', a virtuosic set of divisions on a ground for solo violin and continuo from a MS at Uppsala. The pieces by Simpson come from *Opusculum newer Pavanen, Galliarden...* (Frankfurt am Main, 1610) and *Opus newer Paduanen, Galliarden, Intraden...* (Hamburg, 1617), both in five parts, and *Taffel-Consort* (Hamburg, 1621), scored for the more modern ensemble of four parts with continuo.

For the recording Manfred Cordes uses a group consisting of two violins, transverse flute, four viols, lute, cittern, bandora and chamber organ. This allows pieces to be played as the composers intended with a complete string consort, but also to be arranged for a variety of other ensembles, including an English-type mixed consort of violin, flute and bass viol taking the outer parts and the plucked instruments effectively substituting for the missing inner parts; the plucked instruments are also added to some of the pieces played by the string consort. I found most of these arrangements effective and plausible (pictures show

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

*Bertali Sonatas* Le Concert Brisé, William Dongois 65' 02"  
 Accent ACC 24260

As well as being a great musical treat, this recording has gone exploring the murky trail (and drawn no definitive conclusions) of the composer(s) of repertoire on it. To explain to the uninitiated: numerous works (and the list is expanded courtesy of Dongois's research) of the mid 17th century often appear in disparate sources, be they manuscript or printed, attributed

that the English mixed consort was known in Germany), with the three plucked instruments giving the dances a delightful richness and rhythmic drive.

I was less convinced by the use of a mixed consort of strings, with violins on the top parts and viols taking the lower parts. In Germany mixing violins with viols seems only to have developed in the middle of the 17th century; before then professional string players such as Brade and Simpson seem to have used them as alternatives: a violin consort for accompanying dancing and viols for more serious pieces. On the practical level, the violins used here tend to be too loud and forceful for the viols (they sound as if they are rather later models than those that Brade and Simpson would have known), and I missed the up-front quality that a complete violin consort brings to lively dance music. Conversely, the more serious pavans and galliards, such as Simpson's extraordinary 'Sachevil's dolorosi' from the 1610 book (presumably a memorial to Thomas Sackville, first Earl of Dorset, d. 1608), would benefit from a complete viol consort. Brade, Simpson and their German followers often advertised their music as being particularly suitable for violen or fiolen, a word that seems to have taken in consorts of violins as well as viols.

Having said that, there is much to enjoy on this CD. Brade and Simpson were both accomplished composers, though Simpson comes across here as the more varied and inventive, with a stronger melodic sense than Brade, who seems to have been better at harmony and rich textures than spinning memorable lines. It is good that the selection of Simpson concentrates on his original compositions; earlier recordings (including my own) tended to go for his arrangements of pieces by Dowland and other English composers or of English popular tunes, such as the very modern pavan he attributed (surely wrongly) to Dowland or the much recorded Ricercar on 'Bonny sweet Robin'. The performances are mostly very good, with well-judged tempi (though the Coral is too slow and pulled-about for my taste), generally good tuning and ensemble, and a sense that everyone is thinking along the same lines about the musical shapes. The main problem is a portrait of a richly dressed man with a sash said in the booklet to be William Brade. It looked familiar but I couldn't place it until Arne Spohr pointed out to me that it's actually the well-known painting of Christian IV of Denmark by Peter Isaacs. Black mark for someone in the production department of CPO!

Peter Holman

Gesualdo *Tenebrae Responses for Good Friday* Taverner Consort & Choir, Andrew Parrott 67' 18"

#### Avie AV2305

This fine recording first appeared in 2000 on the Sony Classical label (SK62977), and I felt at the time that it received a relatively muted critical response, so it is good to see it reissued by Avie. In my opinion it presents Carlo Gesualdo's settings of the *Tenebrae Responses* in the only genuinely palatable way, set in their appropriate context of plainchant. Gesualdo's searingly powerful harmonic progressions are a test for the listener as well as the performers, and to present them as most performers do as end-to-end polyphony shorn of chant is to ask almost the impossible. Certainly it is not how they would ever have been heard at the time. Furthermore, some of the chant, such as the exquisite verse from the Lamentations, proves to be extremely beautiful in its own right. The chant is robustly but sensitively performed by the gentlemen of the Taverner Choir, with some lovely solo singing by Ben Parry, while the Taverner Consort sings the polyphony one to a part. There are several extremely powerful accounts of Gesualdo's masterly *Tenebrae* settings on the market, my personal favourite being the suavely perfect performance of the complete polyphony for the full Holy Week cycle by the Hilliard Ensemble on ECM (843 867-2). The Taverner Consort takes a slightly more abrasive approach to Gesualdo's tortured harmonies, and there are edgy passages where we genuinely feel the pain. However the blend and intonation are impressive and the power undeniable. The added bonus in this performance is the way in which the polyphony blossoms suddenly and unexpectedly out of the chant, or the chant seems to comment on the preceding polyphony, each element providing the other with vital breathing space. Thirteen years is a long gap, but might we hope to hear the rest of Gesualdo's Holy Week *Tenebrae Responses* recorded in their appropriate context of plainchant?

D. James Ross

*Michi dell'Arpa E che vuoi più?* La Gioannina (Nanja Breedijk triple harp, Rémi Cassaigne lute, theorbo, guitar) & Françoise Masset S 72' 49"

Agogique AGO013

+Frescobaldi, Kapsberger, S. Landi, de Macque, Priuli, Trabaci

Some detective work has gone into this recording of a selection of pieces by the little-known Italian harpist and composer, Orazio Michi. Although almost 100 vocal works were found, there was not one for harp, so the instrumental pieces interspersed amongst the vocal pieces are by Trabaci, Frescobaldi, Kapsberger, Priuli and de Macque. Orazio Michi was born c.1595 in Naples and spent his musical career in the households of various

cardinals in Rome. His music is firmly in the dramatically declamatory style of the period, with its stress on the interpretation of the text through contrasts of recitative, arioso and aria. Soprano Françoise Masset certainly brings an emotional depth to her singing, although I felt it was a little too powerful for the sensitive accompaniments and, for my taste, features rather too much vibrato and portamento. La Gioannina is made up of Nanja Breedijk and Rémi Cassaigne, playing triple harp and lute/theorbo/guitar, both excelling in their solo moments.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

**Monteverdi Love and Loss: Monteverdi Madrigals** Arcangelo, Jonathan Cohen dir, with James Gilchrist tenor. Hyperion CDA68019

Although they have produced five CDs as an instrumental group with a single solo singer (including Lestyn Davies and Anna Prohaska), this is Arcangelo's first recording as a choral and instrumental group. Their programme is mostly extracted from books six and eight, with one contribution from book seven. The 12 players are joined by six singers and, in the *Combattimento*, by guest soloist James Gilchrist. Apart from him, the other soloists are not individually named in the CD booklet but are on the Hyperion website. I particularly liked Thomas Walker singing as the Poet in *Volgendo il ciel* – the missing dance movement is provided by Merulo's *Ciaccona*, the only purely instrumental piece on the CD. When singing in chorus, the voices are strong and well projected, albeit with rather too much vibrato from one of the sopranos (also evident in the soprano duet *Ohimè, dov'è il mio ben* and *Ohimè il bel viso*). But they are also capable of the utmost sensitivity, as in the lovely opening of *Hor ch'el ciel e la terra* and at the start of the reflective middle section of *Zefiro torna e'l bel tempo rimena*. Jonathan Cohen makes very effective use of the instrumental forces, and provides attractive harpsichord continuo realisations. One minor whinge, common to many CD programme notes, is that they are written in the order of the books (6-7-8) whereas the CD is in the reverse order. Perhaps it is just my reviewing activities that lead me to prefer the notes to be in the same order as the music that I hear, whether in concert or on CD. Similarly, in my own concerts, I tend to order pieces in chronological order. Andrew Benson-Wilson

**Salamone Rossi Il Mantovano Hebreo: Italian Madrigals, Hebrew Prayers and instrumental music** Profeti della Quinta Linn CKD 429 SACD 60'03"

Several Rossi recordings are around now, but with Hebrew and secular music

separated, which is probably what most Jews would have expected. The first Rossi Hebrew disc I heard coincided with a visit from a pair of amateur (but skilled) string players from Haifa so they could confirm that the pronunciation of the Czech singers was plausible. These singers are from Galilee. There are, however, only 4 psalms included. Several of the secular vocal items have familiar titles, the first being *Sfogava con le stelle*, utterly different from Monteverdi's declamatory setting, but different enough not to compete. The third element is the instrumental pieces. Rossi was involved in music in Mantua along with Monteverdi in the first decade of the 1600s, and his music is, despite its generally short length, impressive (30 pieces in 60 minutes), as indeed are the performers, from Galilee.

The Profeti won the York competition in 2011 – judging by this CD, deservedly. (AB-W reviewed an earlier CD in *EMR* June 2010.) I didn't hear that, but I certainly recommend this CD strongly. CB

*The Steffani Project* Cecilia Bartoli etc, Coro della Radiotelevisione svizzera, I Barocchisti Decca 478 5827 (228' 21") see p.10

*Guardian Angel: works by Biber, Bach, Tartini, Pisendel & Matteis* Rachel Podger Channel CCSSA35513

This disc has, quite rightly, been nominated for a BBC Music Magazine award. The "full marks" review in that publication called the disc "stupendous". Little of the repertoire she plays is that well known – alongside her own transcription of Bach's A minor flute Partita, we have three pieces by Matteis (in her booklet note she reminisces about the fun she and the Palladian Ensemble had with his music), two sonatas by Tartini, a fantastic rendition of Pisendel's A minor solo sonata, and finally the eponymous Passacaglia from Biber's "Rosary" sonatas. If you download the readily available PDF of Pisendel's MS, you can see its considerable technical challenges, and then be all the more amazed by Podger's ability not only to play the notes but her alchemy in making such beautiful sounds in so doing. While many of the critics have been awed by the Tartini pieces, which seem currently to be flavour of the month (given that I've recently reviewed two discs entirely devoted to them), for me it is Podger's calmly serene Biber that deserves the plaudits. Either way, I don't think BBC Music Magazine will be the only award this disc will be nominated for. BC

*La bella più bella: songs from early baroque* Italy Roberta Invernizzi S, Craig Marchi-

telli archlute & theorbo 77' 14" Glossa GCD922902 Caccini, Carissimi, d'India, Castaldi, Ferrara, Kapsberger, Merula, Monteverdi, Piccinini, Romano, Luigi Rossi & Barbara Strozzi

This delightful exploration of the expressive Italian solo voice repertoire in the early years of the baroque starts with Caccini's 1601 *Le nouve musiche*, and then journeys via Carissimi, Strozzi, Merula, d'India to Monteverdi. Pieces for lute in similar vein by Piccinini and Kapsberger complete the programme. I have praised Roberta Invernizzi's singing in concert reviews, so it is lovely to hear that she is equally impressive on CD. Her voice is perfect for this repertoire, combining purity, clarity, delicacy and a real sense of dramatic expression, she rarely rises above a mezzo forte. Craig Marchitelli accompaniment is similarly musically sensitive. They recorded in the attractive acoustic of the Oratorio di Sante Croce in Mondovi, Piedmont, a space that gives just the right amount of resonance. An outstanding CD from an outstanding singer. Andrew Benson-Wilson

*Spicy: "Exotic" Music for Violin* Les Passions de l'Ame, Meret Lüthi 62' 12" deutsche harmonia mundi 88883748742 Biber *Harmonia Artificiosa-Ariosa* III & VI, *Sonata... representativa* Fux *Turcaria* K331 Schmelzer *Die Fechtschule, Die Türkenschlacht*

The CD cover promises "Austrian baroque music, spiced with oriental exoticness, virtuosity, scordatura, programmatic approaches, dulcimer & percussion, played on violins by Jacobus Stainer." And that is exactly what you get on this debut CD by Les Passions de l'Ame. They are led by the outstanding Swiss violinist Meret Lüthi who, along with fellow violinist Sabine Stoffer and Matthias Jäggi, viola, play instruments by Stainer from 1659/60. One of the most interesting pieces is Andreas Anton Schmelzer's *Die Türkenschlacht bei Wien* 1683, amazingly an arrangement of Biber's Rosary Sonata X, which depicts the crucifixion. But the highlight for me was the Aria and Variations from Biber's Partita VI (*Harmonica Artificiosa-Ariosa*) – an extraordinary performance by Meret Lüthi. As well as choosing a fascinating repertoire, Les Passions de l'Ame's use of instruments and interpretations are imaginative and evocative – the addition of the dulcimer and a variety of percussion instruments did nothing to ruffle my authenticity feathers. Spicy and Exotic are well chosen words. Andrew Benson-Wilson

#### LATE BAROQUE

*Bach St John Passion* James Gilchrist Evangelista, Matthew Rose Jesus, Ashley Riches Pilatus, Elizabeth Watts, Sarah Connolly, Andrew Kennedy, Christopher

Purves SATB, Academy of Ancient Music, Choir of the AAM, Richard Egarr 2 CDs, 104' 37 + extras. AAMoo2

The 1724 version, we are told, on the back (though not the front) cover. Actually, unless you are intimately acquainted with the score you might not notice the differences from what we usually hear\* though there are myriad melodic details that differ from the 'standard' 1740s (partial) revision. What you might twitch at, however, are the prominence of the harpsichord (joining the organ, for example, to accompany the Evangelist's and other recitatives); the presence of the lute in movements other than its specified obbligato; some surprising (both faster and slower than we generally hear); and the micro-management of the tempo in chorales that, I felt, robs them of their musical flow even if it does enhance the significance of textual details. If these issues suggest that Richard Egarr is going out on a bit of limb with this performance, in two other respects he stays solidly mainstream – instrumentation and vocal forces. There is a case for there having been no flutes in the 1724 St John, though here the soprano retains her customary partner. The ever-thorny 'how many singers' conundrum is ignored and we are offered the lavishness of a choir of 16 (from whom the Maid, Peter and the Servant are drawn), four aria singers and three further soloists as Evangelist, Jesus and Pilate. However, the original performing material strongly suggests, to say the least, that Bach used only 8 singers. So while we might have the notes of 1724 we have the sounds of 2014. And among them James Gilchrist (Evangelist) is beyond praise, dispassionate narrator and involved and involving guide all-in-one. Matthew Rose brings a welcome darkness of voice to the role of Jesus and among the aria singers Sarah Connolly reigns in the vibrato to intertwine with the sinuous oboe lines in her first aria and duet with the affecting gamba in the second. I did not enjoy the soprano arias as much. For me, the voice came from a different musical world from that of the instruments, especially in *Zerfliess*. Overall the actual telling of the story is thrusting and powerful – maintaining the mood established in the opening movement – and this is undoubtedly a strongly felt interpretation. But for me, if for no-one else, not all the details convince. David Hansell

\*Those readers wanting to know more about this can consult [www.pieterdirksen.nl/Essays/Johannespassion](http://www.pieterdirksen.nl/Essays/Johannespassion). By the time this edition of *EMR* reaches you the essays from the booklet, as well as other ancillary material, may be available on the AAM website. DH

**Bach Inventions & Sinfonias BWV772-801**  
Simone Dinnerstein piano  
Sony Classics 88883795972

These two sets of 15 pieces formed the basis of my first and second year counterpoint classes at university. Having been warned that I'd be expected to play the two-part inventions after the Christmas break (I was – and still am – useless at the keyboard, having never had lessons), I was dreading the first session back. To my delight, I found that someone in the class was even worse than me, and I later found that I had a knack for imitating Bach that prevented me ever having to perform my offerings – unlike the ill-fated Mary, whose circle of fifths progression was likened by our tutor to the development section of a Sibelius symphony movement. Imagine my relative joy, then, at hearing such dry didactic pieces played – and enjoyed – as "real music", by someone for whom the piano keyboard is a playground, where getting all the right notes in the correct order is simple, and transforming minimal musical lines into full-on excitement! I do not often listen to piano music, but I can see myself returning to this for pleasure before too long. BC

**Bach The Six Partitas BWV825/830**  
Virginia Black piano 144' 03" (2 CDs)  
cd 35312

Virginia Black teaches harpsichord at the Royal Academy in London so why, you might ask, does her latest recording feature Bach played on the piano? I would reply, why not? Of course, there will be cries of "heretic", but they will come from people who have never heard her play. Ideally, yes, I would prefer to hear my Bach on an appropriate instrument, but then I might have to put up with the personal quirks of this or that performer, or – heaven forbid – the dreaded lute stop, essential to provide variety of colour. Virginia Black uses all her experience of playing (and of course teaching) Bach on early keyboards to inform these performances, and she can produce a range of timbre by touch in a way that is simply not possible on plucked keyboards. More than that, though, she uses all the possibilities of the instrument to shape Bach's lines without ever distorting them "for artistic effect" – in fact, I think this is very possibly the best recording of its type I have ever heard. BC

**Bach The Original Lute Works** Joachim Held 59' 02"  
Hänssler Classics CD 98.649  
Suites in E BWV1006a & g BWV995 +  
Präludium, Fuge & Allegro in E flat BWV998

There has been much debate over the years about whether or not Bach's lute music was really intended for the lute.

Some argue that Bach had the *Lautenwerk* in mind – a keyboard instrument with gut strings designed to sound like a lute. In his liner notes, Joachim Held gives a review of this debate, and adds his own opinion that only the music he performs for the present CD was originally intended for the lute. The MS source of the G minor suite (BWV 995) has "Suite pour la luth" in Bach's hand, and the Prelude, Fugue and Allegro (BWV 998) similarly has "pour le luth o cymbal". Both are in comfortable keys for the baroque lute, and although exceptionally a 14-course lute is required for BWV 995, there was such an instrument in Leipzig. The Suite in E minor (BWV 1006a) is in a less friendly key for the lute, but Held argues that by using a different tuning it is possible to make the piece playable.

The Suite in G minor (BWV 995) begins with a Prelude, in which Held relishes Bach's rich harmonies, the diminished sevenths, third inversions and so on, reinforced with deep bass notes on the lowest courses. With the scene set, there is a fugue marked "tres viste". Held's speed of dotted crotchet = 168 is more of an unhurried presto, which allows for good phrasing, and lies comfortably between, for example, Andreas Martin's driving rhythm of 184 and Peter Croton's more restrained 138-144. Typical of Bach, this is a fine piece of writing, although surprisingly, there really are parallel octaves in bar 85. Held's playing is first-rate, and he creates pleasing contrasts within and between the movements, be it the slow-moving, highly ornamented Allemande, the Courante with its gently flowing inégales quavers, or the beautifully atmospheric Sarabande with its surprising yet logical bass notes falling at the end of the bar. The two gavottes and final Gigue roll on apace, to complete an unfussy, and very satisfying performance.

Bach's lute music was notated in staff notation, not tablature – another reason for thinking that a keyboard instrument was intended. The Prelude of BWV 998 has numerous rests in the bass part, which Held observes meticulously, often damping strings to stop the sound continuing. The first part of the Fugue moves slowly in quavers, and Held rolls nearly all the 3-note chords where they occur, which for me is overdone. The second part of the fugue consists of *moto perpetuo* semiquavers, and explores numerous keys. Held admits (understandably) that he finds it difficult, but nevertheless he makes a good fist of it. Given the choice, I would ditch "le luth", and play it all on a "cymbal" instead.

BWV 1006a is a re-working of Bach's Partita no. 3 for solo violin, and the lute retains a light, thin texture, most noticeably in the Loure and minuets. This suite, in particular its *Gavotte en Rondeau*,

is a long-standing favourite with today's classical guitarists, and it is a pleasure to hear Held's thoughtful interpretation of it on the lute.

Stewart McCoy

**Bach The Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin** Luca Fanfoni 136' 40" (2 CDs)  
Dynamic CDS 758/1-2

Luca Fanfoni is a formidable violinist – if you don't believe me, just check out the picture in the booklet. I bet his 1690 fiddle by Goffredo Cappa never sounded like that when it left the luthier's workshop. To be fair, these are extremely passionate interpretations of the most intense music of its kind, and I don't view my role as a critic as questioning a musician's stance, so long as there is no damage done to the integrity of the work(s) in question. These may not be the most HIP of renditions (the *subito pianissimi* did grate on repeated hearing and sometimes I wish he would not spread chords twice just so that he could sustain the important notes in the middle of the texture), but who is to say that Bach himself would have objected? It is certainly no more over-indulgent than some period players I have heard, and well shy of many of today's organists! BC

**Bach 3 Solo Violin Partitas** Jassen Todorov  
Gega New GR19 (79' 03")  
BWV 1002, 1004, 1006

If you are only going to record half of Bach's six works for solo violin, it makes perfect sense to opt for either the three Partitas or the three Sonatas. Bulgarian-born Todorov has opted for the former and uses them as vehicles to display the talent that has brought him critical acclaim in the specialist press. I dare say his Ysaye or Brahms is more stylistically informed that his Bach – using the Corrente from the B minor partita as a demonstration of slurred louré is not my idea of appropriate performance practice. There is no suggestion that Todorov is not a good violinist – though his equally cavalier approach to the Presto *double* of the same movement does lead to considerable unevenness of tone and some dodgy intonation – but this seriously is not one for the HIPster. BC

**Undercover Bach: Orchestral Suites and Concertos** Elbipolis Barockorchester  
Hamburg, Jürgen Groß 70' 44"  
Challenge Classics CC72625  
After BWV 571, 820, 822, 1006, 1067a & Anh. 152

There is nothing wrong with the essential premise of this recording – to re-orchestrate works that survive under Bach's name in the hope of bringing the long-lost original version back to life. Alongside Werner Breig's A minor version for violin or the B minor "flute" suite, Elbipolis present five re-workings by Jörg Jacobi.

Two of them are overtures (or what German musicologists term "concerts en ouverture"), since they both feature a solo woodwind instrument – indeed, the B minor suite is also from this genre), two are ripieno concertos (Bach-lovers avert your eyes from the next sentence: how like Telemann these sound!) and – least successful in my opinion – an arrangement "for harpsichord and strings" of the violin partita in E (here described in the booklet as E flat!) If one purports to undertake such work, surely one must follow the composer one is emulating – either the harpsichord is the solo instrument or it is not; I don't know any concerto movement where the keyboardist plays continuo throughout (such as the Loure here), or where its only contribution is some rather unidiomatic triplet decorations in a repeat. I'm also not sure that Bach would have dropped harpsichord continuo in passages and had a lute take over. That aside, there is much to enjoy here – of course there is, it's Bach! Jacobi has not held back in filling out the implied harmonies with some very neat contrapuntal touches, too. The playing is excellent and the recording brilliantly clear. BC

**Campra Messe de Requiem** La Chapelle Royale, Philippe Herreweghe 43' 25" hmGold HMG501251

This was hailed as a classic recording of a lovely piece on its earlier incarnations (1987 etc.) and it still is. The choral singing is alert and crisp when it has to be and the balance between voices and instruments is good. Some of the solo singing might now be a little more idiomatic but at bargain price this is well worth investigating. The booklet gives no information about the artists (except their names) but everything else is there. David Hansell

**F. Couperin Leçons de Ténèbres** James Bowman, Michael Chance, Robert King, Mark Caudle 63' 09" Hyperion helios CDH55455

Last year (March) I reviewed Robert King's new issue of this repertoire with sopranos. Now here is a re-release of the earlier performances (1990) to which I then referred. The Bowman/Chance combination was in peak form for this and the warm comments the recording then received are still valid. My only tiny caveat is that the downward transposition sometimes 'forces' the organ right hand above the voice and this was occasionally a slight distraction – but don't let this deter you. If you missed this first time round get it now. David Hansell

**Fritz Violin Sonatas op. 3** Plamena Nikitsova vln, Maya Amrein vlc, Jörg-Andreas Bötticher hpsc'd 72' 04" Pan Classics PC 10295

The five sonatas on this delightful recording were published in 1756, when the composer was 40. They are all in three movements, all in major keys (though the last is in B flat, not B!), and all thoroughly deserving of being re-discovered. As the booklet notes rather obtusely state, Fritz's musical language is not easy to categorize – his melodies are frequently longer than one expects, and he is quite partial to side-stepping to avoid predictable harmonies. Bulgarian violinist Plamena Nikitsova is about the same age as the composer was when the music appeared in print, and he could scarcely have hoped for a finer advocate – she has all the virtuosity required for the more demanding passages (of which there are many!), and an ability to shape notes and phrases beautifully. The continuo part is well executed by both players. No surprise to learn that the three met at Schola Cantorum in Basel. BC

**Handel Oratorio Arias: Your tuneful voice** Iestyn Davies cT, Carolyn Sampson S, The King's Consort, Robert King 67' 25" VIVAT 105  
Arias from *Alexander Balus*, *Belshazzar*, *Birthday Ode for Queen Anne*, *The Choice of Hercules*, *Esther*, *Israel in Egypt*, *Jephtha*, *Semele*, *Solomon*, *The Triumph of Time and Truth* + Overtures to *Jephtha* & *Samson*

This is a most enjoyable disc, with Handel and his distinguished interpreters all on top form. The programme includes music from all periods of Handel's career, neatly summarised in the arias from *The Triumph of Time and Truth*, his final oratorio, but derived from his first, *Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno*, and is nicely varied by two overtures (that from *Samson* with particularly electrifying horn playing) and two contrasting duets – amiable, from *Solomon* and agonised, from *Esther*.

Davies sings superbly, and his vocal technique is fully equal to the kaleidoscopic variety of the arias, from the mellow richness of "O sacred oracles" to the fiery determination of "Up the dreadful steep ascending," with meltingly lovely sustained, quiet singing in "Yet can I hear that dulcet lay." He is admirably partnered by Carolyn Sampson in the duets.

The orchestra revels in Handel's lush scorings, with prominent parts for recorders, solo oboe, horns and trumpets, as well as characteristically resourceful string writing. And there are some rarities, e. g. Athamas's aria from *Semele*, or Alexander's from *Alexander Balus*. No reason to hesitate – go forth and acquire! Alastair Harper

**Handel 8 "Great" Suites for Keyboard** Richard Egarr hpsc'd 118' 12" (2 CDs) Harmonia Mundi USA HMU 907581.82

The brilliance of Richard Egarr's technique is now sufficiently familiar to

take for granted the virtuosity of his performances of the eight so-called 'Great' keyboard suites of Handel published in 1720 by John Cluer of London. Egarr here employs his Joel Katzman copy of a Ruckers, which he has had tuned up to a=422, a pitch Handel is known to have used in London and substantially higher than the A=390 used by Ludger Rémy in his splendid cpo recording (2002). It gives the instrument a marginally brighter sound, but what is truly remarkable is the big sound Egarr produces from the instrument when appropriate. I don't think I've previously been made so aware of the near-orchestral sonority of movements like the Overture and Passacaille of the G-minor Suite (No. 7). Egarr's playing is in fact marvellously inventive throughout, employing an admirably flexible approach to rhythm, profuse ornamentation of repeats, and the inclusion of cadenzas where the opportunity arises, the witty one he provides at the exuberant climax of the Passacaille mentioned above being especially noteworthy. There are just times when I would have welcomed a steadier pace – the Courante of the Suite in E (No. 5) is just one example – particularly given the resonant recording (at Potton Hall, Suffolk) accorded the instrument, which at times threatens to blur lines in quicker music. But I would certainly not wish to give the impression that these performances treat the music merely as vehicles for flamboyant virtuosity. Indeed, some of the most compelling moments come in the allemandes, oases of satisfying repose and contemplation, while Egarr realises to the full the expressive quality inherent in the near-tragedy of the opening Adagio of the F-major Suite (No. 2). The set is strongly recommended if you want the major suites. Anyone looking for a more comprehensive recent collection might like to investigate Gilbert Rowland's more conventional but always reliable two double CD sets on Divine Art.

Brian Robins

**Murcia Cifras selectas de Guitarra** Christian Gutiérrez baroque guitar 63' 14" Carpe Diem CD - 16299

All the music for this CD comes from 'Cifras Selectas de Guitarra' a MSt dated 1722, which contains music by Santiago de Murcia (1673-1739 – not 1673-1793 as given on the CD cover!) It was discovered about ten years ago by the musicologist Alejandro Vera in Santiago, Chile. A facsimile is available, edited by Vera and published by A-R editions, which was used by Cristian Gutiérrez for this recording. A Google search for "Santiago de Murcia Vera" gives details of the book, together with a transcription of 10 pieces. Vera wrote the booklet notes for the present CD, and his research on Murcia may be seen in his

article, "Santiago de Murcia (1673-1739): new contributions on his life and work", *Early Music*, 36/4 (2008): 597-608.

It is interesting to follow the transcriptions to see how Gutiérrez interprets what Santiago de Murcia has left us. The CD begins with Gutiérrez's own frantic, ear-catching flourishes to introduce *Jacaras por la E*. Only after a passage of strummed chords do we hear what is actually in the MS. The piece consists of variations, mainly *punteado* but with occasional strummed chords, over a short ground bass, and with each variation repeated. After bar 40 Gutiérrez strums the ground before resuming the rest of the piece, after which more strumming is added to round it all off. Momentum is achieved by gradually using faster note values as the piece progresses – from three crotchets in bar 1, to 12 semiquavers in bar 64. The E in the title refers to the guitar alfabeto chord E, which is a chord of D minor.

The last piece, *Marionas por la B* (C major), follows much the same pattern. There is no opening flourish this time – just the ground strummed through a few times before the piece proper begins. The first variation involves thirds and tenths; the second and third variation involve triads, many of which are first inversions; the fourth and fifth variations have practically every note notated either with a trill of some kind or vibrato; the last two variations involve many semiquavers. By and large Gutiérrez sticks closely to his text, but just occasionally throws in a few extra notes of his own to enhance a repeat.

There is much variety here: an energetic *Cumbe por la A* (G major) has exciting rhythms and fast running notes as it explores the whole range of the fingerboard; *Zarambeques por la C* (D major) has flamenco-like taps on the soundboard amongst the opening strums; a lively *Folias Españolas* has some pleasing campanella effects; *Canarios por la C* trips along gently, reminiscent of the well-known setting by Gaspar Sanz; *Pasacalles por la cruz* progresses through its many variations in a dignified way without strummed passages; and *Paradetas por la C* is enlivened with super-fast descending scales.

Gutiérrez's baroque guitar was made by Julio Castaños in Malaga, and it is based on one by Juan Pagés. Gutiérrez strings it with a bourdon on the fourth course, but not on the fifth. It is interesting (but to my mind appropriate) to see Gutiérrez described on the cover as a lutenist, not a guitarist. His interpretation is tastefully understated, and in his non-aggressive way he gives a fair reflexion of how Murcia's virtuosity would have charmed listeners in the Queen's Palace in Madrid, including Maria Luisa, first wife of Philip V, who was an amateur guitarist herself. *Stewart McCoy*

**A. Scarlatti *Clori, ninfa e amante: Arias & Cantatas*** Renata Fusco voice, Massimo Lonardi archlute, Matteo Mela bar. guitar, Lorenzo Micheli theorbo & bar. guitar **Stradivarius STR 33910 47' 47"**  
Excerpts from *La Principessa fedele & Gli equivoci nel Sembianc*; *Cantata di lontananza, Il rosignolo se scioglie il vol* & D. Scarlatti *Sonata K81 in e*

A gentle recording, this disc is as much a showcase for the plucking skills of Lonardi, Matteo Mela and Micheli as it is for the precise voice of Renata Fusco. The most substantial pieces are the two continuo cantatas, affectingly and effectively performed; their subtle charms are fully realised by the ensemble, whose delicate accompaniment allows Scarlatti's meticulous word-painting and fluent melody to glow. The opera arias are similarly effective, the two sinfonias by Alessandro and a sonata by Domenico less so. The actual playing is superb, but the narrow tonal range of the instruments does not do the music full justice. Worth investigating for the cantatas, though.

Alastair Harper

**Vivaldi *Concerti per archi II Concerto Italiano, Rinaldo Alessandrini 51' 14" naïve OP30554***  
RV110, 119, 127, 128, 134, 150, 151, 157, 160, 164 & 166 *Tesori del Piemonte Vol. 57*

With such long series and so many pieces, it is often difficult to listen to new Vivaldi discs without simply sinking into critical auto-pilot. Thank goodness Alessandrini has the ability to grab one by the scruff of the neck and give a good shake. The 11 concerti on this disc (played by a one-to-a-part band including contrabbasso and theorbo) all have three movements in quick-slow-quick format; five of them are in minor keys. The reduced size of the band means that cadences can be shaped much more easily than would be possible with fuller forces. It also lends the sound a greater clarity – so when Vivaldi's viola lines become important (in contrapuntal movements, for example), hearing them is no challenge. These "string concertos" are already very popular and these chamber performances can only enhance their reputation. Those middle movements where the violins play in unison might have been a fly in the ointment, but Mauro Lopez Ferreira and Nicholas Robinson have clearly mastered the art of meticulously playing in unison. Of the most recent Vivaldi Edition releases, this must rate as a favourite. *BC*

**Zelenka *Missa Paschalis/Litanie Ominum Sanctorum*** Gabriela Eibenová, Terry Wey, Cyril Auvity, Marián Krejčík SATB, Ensemble Inégal, Prague Baroque Soloists, Adam Viktora 68' 21"  
Nibiru 01582231

The latest offering from Adam Viktora and his Czech forces is a cracker! Zelenka's massive Easter mass (recorded here for the first time ever) is a masterpiece from the four celebratory trumpets of the opening, through the reflective moments (more than one of which feature solo violin) and – of course – the stunning choruses with all the expected harmonic and chromatic twists, this is a composer at the height of his creative powers. And these are performers who have engaged with his music as no others have, and I do not believe that it has anything to do with there being something in Czech genes. Rather there is an extremely talented group of musicians and a conductor with a seemingly unerring affinity with the repertoire who have devoted themselves to complete immersion and are now reaping (for all of us!) the results. What a journey it has been: I could listen to ANY of the musicians on this CD all day and all night. In fact, some times I do... Although I hope they never run out of Zelenka, I would welcome them turning their attentions to some other composers from that part of the world – Simon Brix for starters. If you are always at a loss as to how you should follow your passion setting of choice on Good Friday, this recording could be the answer. This is one of my favourite CDs of the month. *BC*

**The BaRock Experience: Masterpieces for cello & organ** Jelena & Ljerka Očic 79' 11" *Challenge Classics CC72607*  
Barrière Sonatas in b, g, e *Vivaldi RV40, 43, 46*

The concept of an organ continuo seemed, on opening the disc, a little odd, but to use a (presumably) large organ with a range of colourful stops seemed even more implausible. Jelena Očic's playing (at modern pitch) is nevertheless stylish but her sister's organ realisation goes beyond the bounds of probability. Even the great improvisers Handel and Bach would have felt this to go way beyond 'le bon goût'. To play repeats, as happens for example in a Vivaldi sonata, not only pianissimo but sul ponticello accompanied by tweeting organ, is just one example of the novel 'experience' that these two performers are trying to achieve. Yet all too often the organ dominates rather than accompanies the solo instrument. That said, one cannot help but admire the improvisatory orchestral textures the Ljerka manages to achieve on the organ. *Ian Graham-Jones*

**The House of Dreams** Tafelmusik, Jeanne Lamon 71' 52" (CD) 91' 54" (DVD) *Tafelmusik TMK1020DVD*  
Music by Bach, Handel, Marais, Purcell, Sweelinck, Telemann and Vivaldi

Starting and finishing in the Handel House Museum in Brook Street, London, the

DVD visits the Palazzo Mangili-Valmarosa in Venice, the Golden ABC (Delft), the Palais-Royal (Paris) and the Bach Museum and Archive in Leipzig, with suitable music performed by Tafelmusik. The visits are linked by a commentary from the Canadian Blair Williams. On the way we learn a great deal about contemporary art – paintings which Handel is known to have had in his house, and other works of art in the other houses, as well as such unrelated information on the history of linen, mirror making, etc. The music (it would be too long to list it all in detail) consists of selected movements from Handel (concerti grossi movements, dances from *Alcina*), Vivaldi concerto movements, one Sweelinck virginal piece (the variations *Engelse Fortuyn* played on harpsichord) are linked to the famous Vermeer painting *The Music Lesson*), miscellaneous Purcell, a suite of movements from Marin Marais' *Alcyone* with a fine concluding Chaconne, miscellaneous J.S. Bach movements and the Ouverture of Telemann's *Wassermusik* suite. The performances, as goes without saying from this ensemble, are superb throughout. What is all the more impressive is that they play not only standing but from memory – I can imagine the problems of memorising an inner or viola part must be all the more daunting! My only comment is that some more interesting music by native Dutch composers (even Dutch composers that settled in England such as de Fesch or Hellendaal) might have been more appropriate than choosing Purcell, with his tenuous links with William III – as glorious as the music is. The DVD production is, thankfully, free of gimmickry and always appropriate to the settings. For those that prefer to listen to the music without the distractions of viewing – and possibly with better sound quality – the CD contains the complete programme of the music.

Ian Graham-Jones

#### CLASSICAL

C. P. E. Bach *Magnificat* Elizabeth Watts, Wiebke Lehmkühl, Lothar Odinius, Markus Eiche SATB, RIAS Kammerchor, Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, Hans-Christoph Rademann 56' 05"  
Harmonia Mundi HMC 902167  
+Heilig ist Gott Wq217, Sinfonia in D Wq183/1

The 300th anniversary of the composer's birthday gets off to a fabulous start with this wonderful recording from harmonia mundi. The two choral works are an interesting fusion of baroque styles and more rococo features – some of the slower movements with shifting chords and sudden dynamic contrasts could easily be Haydn or even Schumann – and feature some excellent singing from the soloists and chorus alike. I can imagine the

Magnificat becoming a regular feature in the choral repertoire – it would make an ideal partner for his father's setting. The choice of symphony (and its placement at the end of the disc rather than in the middle) is a little lame – it must be one of his best-known works and surely 2014 is the year to dig out some "new" material, of which there is plenty. That was a neat segue into my only other complaint – 56 minutes? Really? To be fair, the vocal music was recorded in 2013 and the symphony in 2011, so this is a composite; that said, C P E Bach is a major composer and this is a "once in a lifetime" opportunity truly to celebrate his music – even though the performances are absolutely top notch, he deserves better. BC

C. P. E. Bach *Cello Concertos* Antonio Meneses, Münchener Kammerorchester Pan Classics PC 10294 (66' 59" / 1998)

This is probably the first of many re-releases in the 300th anniversary year of the composer's birth. The three concertos for cello (Wq170 in A minor, here with cadenzas by Wolfgang Boettcher, Wq171 in B flat with cadenzas by the soloist and Wq172 in A with original cadenzas) are neatly played by Antonio Meneses and the orchestra (65'43" + hpscd). I wish non-HIP players would grasp the harmonic importance of preparing a trill – played as a simple rapid alteration of main tone and the note above as here, it is almost as if the ornament disappears altogether. If you don't know these delightful pieces, you could do worse than buy this, but also try Hidemi Suzuki on BIS. BC

C. P. E. Bach *The Solo Keyboard Music* vol. 27 *Fortsetzung Sonatas Nos 4–6* Miklós Spányi clavichord 73' 42"  
BIS BIS-2043 CD

Wq51/4–6 (+embellished versions of their second movements) Hr280, 141, 62), Wq50/3 (an embellished version of the third movement)

Volume 27 completes the survey of the so-called 'Fortsetzung' Sonatas, Wq 51 started on Vol. 26, a disc reviewed by Noel O'Regan in *EMR* 157. In addition to the sonatas 4–6 are Bach's own alternative embellished versions of the slow movements from the sonatas, as well as Wq65/36, a second varied version of Wq51/1 (the first was included on the previous CD) and an alternative finale from Wq50/3. Such rigorous documentation is characteristic of this heroic series, the adjective being applicable to both Miklós Spányi and BIS. Rather less rigorous is proof checking, on the box and contents listing No. 4 as being in C rather than the correct key, D minor. The instrument used is by Joris Potvlieghe, the same as that noted by Noel O'Regan.

Having dipped into this series, what

especially impresses when I do return to it is the consistency of Spányi's performances, not so much the technical facility of his playing – by now a given – but its continuing freshness and avoidance of any sense of the routine that might easily have crept in. Out of context, this music might impress simply by dint of its eccentricity and quirkiness, yet it is salutary to recall that all the works here were composed during the 1750s, within a decade of the death of Bach's father. That these highly original, even experimental, works bear no relationship with anything composed by JSB is perhaps one of their most striking features. The embellished movements serve as a reminder that slow movements in particular never consisted simply of the printed notes and will provide valuable source material for students of ornamentation. Those collecting the series will obviously need no second bidding. Brian Robins

**Hardouin Complete Four-Part a cappella Masses Volume One** St Martin's Chamber Choir, Timothy Krueger 60' 38"  
Toccata Classics TOCC0191  
Mass No. 1 *Incipite Domino in tympanis*, Mass No. 3 *Jucundum sit eloquium meum* Mass No. 4 *Exultate et invocate nomen ejus* (all publ. 1772)

A most interesting disc. For most of his long life, Henri Hardouin was Maître de Chapelle at Rheims Cathedral, both before and after the Revolution. These masses, the only published oeuvre in his lifetime, are scored for four voices, but unusually, without continuo. The music is in the traditional *stile antico*, but any imitative writing is mainly confined to the opening few bars of each movement and quickly gives way to graceful, tuneful homophony, often in a stately triple time, with much use of diminished seventh chords, giving a unique flavour of its period.

Much thought has obviously gone into this recording. Pronunciation is "French"; the many notated ornaments are neatly sung, and the unusual slurrings – particularly in melismatic passages – are convincingly phrased (try the opening of the *Sanctus* of the first mass, for example). The booklet notes are erudite and comprehensive; it looks as though a further disc containing the remaining three masses is planned. One to look out for!

Alastair Harper

**Haydn Flute Trios** Patrick Cohen, Konrad Hünteler, Christoph Coin 62'  
hmGold HMG 501521  
Trios 28-30

Even when writing a 'simple bagatelle', as Haydn described the third of these trios, the composer could not fail to write music which not only charms but also engages and sometimes shocks us. So a warm welcome to the reappearance of this 1995

recording of works which just pre-date Haydn's London visits. The flute is not merely ornamental but engages in dynamic dialogue with the piano and Christoph Coin on cello makes sure we hear all the, admittedly rare, moments of melodic interest in the bass. The tone, character and balance between the instruments are excellent (the piano is a 1790 Walter) and the supporting essay informative. This is music that will make you smile!

David Hansell

**Mozart Horn Concertos** Roger Montgomery, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Margaret Faultless 70' 04" Signum Records SIGCD345

K370b, 371, 412, 417, 447, 494a, 495 & 514

Of all the fragments Mozart left us there are surely few more tantalising or puzzling than that of a horn concerto in E flat (K494a), started in the summer of 1786, but unaccountably abandoned after fewer than 100 bars of a magisterial opening Allegro. Had it continued in the same vein it would surely have at least rivalled No. 3 in E flat (K447) of 1787, the best of these concertos and a work that can be spoken of in the same breath as the great series of piano concertos composed in 1785/6. Also here in what I suspect is a first recording is the Rondo in E flat, K371, completed in 2008 by Stephen Roberts following the recent rediscovery of 60 missing bars. Roberts is also responsible for providing an alternative reconstruction of the Rondo finale of K386b, the last of the concertos Mozart composed for his old Salzburg friend, Joseph Leutgeb or Leitgeb. Left unfinished by Mozart at his death, it was somewhat uninspiringly completed by his pupil Süssmayr. Roberts' more ambitious solution seems to me to work well.

From a musicological standpoint, then, the disc is already of considerable interest. Fortunately, if not unexpectedly, we are given splendid performances to match. Recorded live in the QEH in 2012, they are characterised by playing not of only of technical excellence on the part of both soloist and a modestly sized OAE, but are full of not only the joie de vivre and wit the concertos demand, but also sensitivity. If there are times when Roger Montgomery appears to be living a little on the edge, then that is surely how Mozart intended his friend Leutgeb to feel about playing these pieces. Apart from the Romance of K495, where the pulse seems too slow, tempos are well judged; the pointed lightness of touch brought to the Rondo finale of K417 is one of the many delights of a version of these ever vernal works that stands among the best. Incidentally those who – like me, I confess – are puzzled about the relevance of a cover picture featuring a piece of cheese carved

into the shape of an 'M' may need reminding that Leutgeb became a cheesemonger after he settled in Vienna.

Brian Robins

**Vogel** *La Toison d'or* Marie Kalinine *Médée*, Jean-Sébastien Bou *Jason*, Judith Van Wanroij *Hipsiphile*, Jennifer Borghi *La Sybille*, Hrachuchi Bassenz *Calciope*, Martin Nyvall *Arcas*, Franziska Kern & Dominique Lepeudry *Suivantes*, Le Concert Spirituel, Hervé Niquet 109' 16" Glossa GCD921628

Born in Nuremberg in 1756, Johann Christoph Vogel might well be considered a proto-Romantic, a man of near-paranoid sensitivity and a drunkard who died in 1788 at the early age of 32. He had moved to Paris in 1776, where he composed a considerable amount of instrumental and orchestral music, along with two operas, both of which have librettos by Philippe Desriaux. Desriaux appears to have been something of a fellow spirit who was equally devoted to the pleasures of wine. *La Toisin d'or*, the first of these tragédie lyriques was composed in 1781, but not staged at the Opéra until 1786. Shortly after settling in Paris, Vogel had seen Gluck's *Alceste*, as a result becoming a fervent follower whose own music shows the profound influence of the Bohemian, a trait that would see Vogel become embroiled in the operatic war between the Gluckists and the followers of Piccinni and Italian opera, the latter of whom eventually drove *La Toisin d'or* from the stage.

As may be guessed from the title, *La Toisin d'or* is based (loosely) on the story of the Jason's capture of the Golden Fleece, but at its heart lies the bitter enmity between the frenzied Medea and Jason's devoted wife Hypsipyle, a terrible passion that results in Medea's on-stage murder of the queen of Lemnos in act 2. It is in fact Medea who totally dominates an opera that never lets up on powerful dramatic intensity, Jason, a betrayer of both the women in his life, emerging as a heel of the lowest order. The impassioned score – which also includes a ferocious storm scene in which the fleeing Argonaut fleet is destroyed by fire – reveals Vogel to have been a master of orchestral colour, both in dramatic music and more lyrical writing such as the great act 3 scena for Medea, where the debt to Gluck is made manifest by a near-direct quotation from 'Che faro'.

The sound from the live performance is not flattering to the women's voices, giving that of soprano Judith Van Wanroij's Hipsiphile in particular an unpleasantly shrill edge at times. Mezzo Marie Kalinine fares better and indeed is a very fine Médée, encompassing the varied emotions of the sorceress in impressive style, while the splendid baritone Jean-Sébastien Bou gives the role of Jason an

undeserved heroic stature. Hervé Niquet's direction is thoroughly idiomatic and he draws from Le Concert Spirituel some impressive playing of the richly rewarding score. It would now be good to hear Vogel's later opera, *Démophon*, considered by the composer's contemporaries to be a still finer work.

Brian Robins

**Che Puro Ciel: The Rise of Classical Opera** Bejun Mehta cT, Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, RIAS Kammerchor, René Jacobs harmonia mundi HMC 902172 69' 50" Music by J. C. Bach, Gluck, Hasse, Mozart & Traetta

Even in a vocal sector currently as richly stocked with exceptional talent, Bejun Mehta stands out as one of the most complete of countertenors. Not only does he have the beauty of voice, but he can also boast a technique that includes accurately placed and articulated passaggi and the ability to sing a trill, that rarest of all vocal attributes. Then there is the dramatic response and sheer musical intelligence. Listen, for example to the opening track 'Che puro ciel!'. Taken more slowly than might be thought comfortable, the ineffable beauty of nature and the Elysian serenity is spell-bindingly unveiled before us by Mehta and Jacobs, leaving the crucial change of mood at 'Ma non per me' to assault the listener like a douche of cold water. Elsewhere, one can wonder at the opening 'Cara' of Ascanio's aria from Mozart's *Ascanio in Alba*, sustained with rock-steady tone and culminating in an exquisitely placed trill. And to hear Mehta's so-subtle use of portamento provides a timely reminder of just what a potent expressive weapon it can be in the right hands.

There is so much about Mehta's singing to relish and celebrate, that it is only with reluctance that I return to critical duty. Perhaps we need not make too much of the title of a selection called *The Rise of Classical Opera* that includes no Jommelli, no Perez, no David, while paradoxically including arias by Mozart and J. C. Bach cast in full, old-fashioned da capo form. More seriously, we have also to consider the now customary eccentricities of Jacobs' treatment of continuo. Here, while Raphael Alpermann is listed as both harpsichord and fortepianist, I detect only the latter in a group of works that almost certainly never witnessed a fortepiano continuo in performance. Worse still, in now characteristic Jacobs style, the instrument is frequently insufferably intrusive, nowhere more so than in the lovely 'Se il fulmine' (Gluck, *Ezio*), where it sounds like a concertante part. Such aberrations are not only un-historical, they are, more damagingly, unmusical. Enough. I don't want to end on a carping note. There is some wonderfully accomplished

singing here and the disc demands to be heard by anyone who cares about the art.

Brian Robins

19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

**Beethoven *Missa Solemnis*** Lucy Crowe S, Jennifer Johnston mS, James Gilchrist T, Matthew Rose B, Monteverdi Choir, Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, Peter Hanson leader, John Eliot Gardiner SDG 718 (69' 58")

It takes a conductor of extraordinary courage and confidence in his forces to contemplate offering a live recording of this famously unperformable work, but here is such a thing. Gardiner's virtuoso forces (apparently he suggested to the soloists, albeit in jest, that none of them were good enough to be in the choir) really deliver the goods in heroic proportions but not just by being loud. I was impressed by, as much as anything, the range of expression and contrasts offered in a passage such as the middle of the Gloria and I also appreciated the ability of the soloists to function as a quartet when required, as opposed to the 'four vibratos in search of a note' which often wrecks an otherwise good oratorio performance. The Barbican acoustic has few fans but the good old BBC Radio 3 engineers have done a great job in capturing the sounds, both great and small (some marvellous orchestral solos), though the last chord does sound rather 'chopped off', perhaps to avoid the inclusion on the disc of any applause. JEG's previous recording of this musical Colossus (for Archiv) won awards and this successor might well do the same. I really have enjoyed it more on each listening, helped by the excellent essay. David Hansell

**Beethoven *Christus am Ölberge*** Plácido Domingo, Luba Organosova, Andreas Schmidt, Rundfunkchor Berlin, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Kent Nagano hmGold HMG501802 47' 35"

In 2003 this was released at full price which was pretty stingy. At reduced price it's now better value, and although the performance doesn't really qualify for *EMR* it is worth noting as a good recording of Beethoven's only oratorio and his first composition after the Heiligenstadt Testament. The focus is on Jesus' personal agony and Domingo gives us all the emotion, if not all the German. This opening set piece and the concluding Handelian fugue for the chorus are the highlights and the latter is delivered with vigour if not always finesse. As with all the *harmonia mundi* re-issues I have reviewed this time the booklet includes a helpful essay, texts and translations.

David Hansell

**Carulli *Unpublished Works for Guitar***  
Raffaele Carpino guitar 71' 50"  
Tactus TC 770302  
Opp. 81, 99 & 172

Anyone studying classical guitar today will no doubt at some stage dip into the works of the Neapolitan guitarist Ferdinando Carulli (1770-1841), one of a generation of Italian guitarists writing for the new, fashionable 6-string guitar. (Why does the CD cover have Quentin La Tour's painting of Jacques Dumont le Romain playing the old 5-course instrument?) Carulli spent the latter part of his life performing and teaching the guitar in Paris, and he composed more than 400 works, including two important tutor books: *Metodo* (1810) and *Metodo Completo* (1825).

The present CD contains three works by Carulli, which have not been recorded before. First is *Trois Petites Sonates Pour Guitare* (op. 81), published in 1815, and dedicated to Monsieur Le Colonel Fiando, a French soldier who was presumably fond of the instrument. Each of the three sonatas consists of two movements. Sonata 1 has an unassuming Larghetto enhanced with chromatic inflections, alternating tonic-dominants before the final cadence, and ending with a triple suspension. A Rondo (Poco Allegretto) bustles along with broken chords, and has a minor section before the rondo theme recurs; more tonic-dominants and an extended arpeggio (like understated Beethoven) bring it to a close.

Sonata 2 begins with a restrained Largo, with more chromatic inflections, a passage of triplets, 6/4-5/3 cadences, augmented chords, and a tonic pedal towards the end of a section. I enjoyed Raffaele Carpino's carefully phrased interpretation, although it is a pity about the occasional squeak from a finger sliding along a wound string. The Rondo has a jaunty theme in 6/8, and a minor key passage with diminished sevenths. There are sequences of first inversion chords, and oft-repeated phrases. Sonata 3 has a theme (Andante) and three variations (Allegretto), one of which features broken chords, and a minor section with a gloomy dominant pedal. The Finale (Allegretto) opens with slightly out-of-tune octaves, the tune moves briefly to the bass accompanied by repeated chords above. Carulli's harmonic palette is somewhat limited, and suffers from a preponderance of tonic and dominant chords. Short contrasting sections each with their own distinctive features help keep the attention of an idle listener, and one can imagine Carulli charming well-to-do Parisians in their salons.

The second work, Carulli's *Recueil De Six Differens Morceaux Pour Guitare* (op. 99), was published by Pleyel in Paris in 1816. There are no extremes of tempo —

Larghetto espressivo, Andante, Largo, Tempo di valzer, Larghetto, and Poco allegretto. Nos 2 and 5 are the longest pieces of the set, and involve a theme and variations with varying degrees of technical difficulty. The Largo is a particularly fine piece of music, with an appropriately well-paced and sensitive performance by Carpino.

The final opus is *Trois Rondeaux Pour Guitare* (op. 172) first published in Paris c. 1822. Carpino has a copy of the original at home, from which he has recently published his own edition, at Edizioni Armelin di Padova, cat. no. PDM 282. More of the same, perhaps, but with a surprising variety of ear-catching effects, including thirds above off-beat pedal notes, three-note horn passages, and Alberti basses. Carulli's guitar pieces may not be the greatest music ever written, but nevertheless Carpino's interpretation does him proud.

Stewart McCoy

**Cherubini *Cantatas*** Mailys de Villoutreys, Ursula Eitinger, Andreas Karasiak SAT, Nicolas Boulanger, François Eckert narrators, Kölner Akademie, Michael Alexander Willens 65' 50"

cpo 777 776-2  
*Amphion, Circé, Clytemnestre & La Mort de Mirabeau*

While *Médée*, the Requiem in C minor and the six string quartets are familiar repertoire, Cherubini's cantatas are rare beasts. Indeed, all three on the present disc appear to be recorded for the first time, while *Amphion* (1786) was given its first ever performance by these performers in September 2012. The three choruses from the play *La Mort de Mirabeau* (1791) are also a first recording. They can rapidly be disposed of, being awful potboilers of the kind that became fashionable in revolutionary France. The track lasts 10 minutes; it seems like a lifetime. Much the best of the classically-inspired cantatas, all cast in the form of alternating accompanied recitative and air is, *Clytemnestre*, where in the earlier part Clytemnestra looks forward to the wedding of her daughter Iphigenia in an exquisitely beautiful air, most affectingly sung. Elsewhere there is a tragic nobility where the clear line from Gluck to Berlioz can be sensed. Mailys de Villoutreys' pure lyric soprano is fine in the lyrical music, but lacks the dramatic weight for the climax of the cantata, while her enunciation is dreadful. Neither of the other cantatas seems to me especially interesting, both inhabiting the same marmoreal neo-Classical world as the paintings of Cherubini's Parisian contemporary Jacques-Louis David. *Circé*, which the notes suggest may have been intended for a haut-contre but is here sung by a grey-voiced female alto, does work up a fine head of passion as the abandoned sorceress evokes all the spirits of hell, but the sing-

ing is so dreary as to drain all emotion from the piece. *Amphion*, for tenor and chorus, is noteworthy mainly for some felicitous orchestration, especially in the overture, parts of which Cherubini later re-used in his *Anacreon* overture. *Brian Robins*

**Colbran Arie Italiane per voce e arpa**  
Maria Chiara Pizzoli S, Marianne Gubri  
harp 61' 49"  
Tactus TC 780302  
Four sets of *Six petits airs italiens* + three songs

These excellent short songs by Isabella Colbran date from her teenage years and early twenties, before she became Mrs. Rossini, and abandoned a life of composition to become prima donna in her husband's operas. To quote the booklet notes: "Colbran's compositions are typical of the chamber music repertoire for amateurs: they consist of short, melodious, through-composed arias with two texts: one in Italian, drawn from Metastasio's poems, the other a free translation into French." They're much better than that faint praise, in fact – these are perfectly competent and pleasing songs indeed (and rather demanding for amateurs), and if it ever comes to light that Isabella Colbran secretly wrote all Rossini's operas for him, I would not be in the least surprised, because she was certainly up to it. (Look into that, please, musicologists).

As was usual for publications of this material at this date, the title pages suggest that they are suitable for piano or harp accompaniment, keen to include the current harp craze among the young ladies of the gentry. These relatively simple accompaniments are crafted so as to be idiomatic for both instruments, though this should not be taken to suggest that the music is insubstantial. In fact, this is very attractive stuff indeed, and far above the level of so much of the 'also ran' amateur-composed songs produced in this period, so it gives me no pleasure to report that there is a serious problem with this release: Ms Pizzoli's tuning. She appears to be one of those singers who, even when she is in tune, gives the impression that she isn't quite, due to the colour of voice she employs, which is partly the fault of her bel canto training. Furthermore, many of the songs contain a Rossinian octave leap upwards as two semiquavers, which reminded me of those times when you watch the cat jump up onto the arm of the sofa, or whatever, but it misjudges it very slightly and fumbles up the very last bit. So really nice music – shame about the singer. It really is a very uncomfortable listen, and the sheer quality of the music itself deserves a much better interpretation than this. Someone should send a copy of the music to Emma. *David Hill*

**Danzi Music for Piano and Winds Vol. 1**  
EnsembleF2 79' 55"  
Devine Music DMCDO02  
Opp. 28 (sonata with horn), 54 (with clarinet) and 41 (quintet with oboe, clarinet, horn & bassoon)

Born into a musical family with strong connections to the famous Mannheim court orchestra, Franz Danzi (1763-1826) never achieved the much sought-after operatic success he desired in Munich or Stuttgart. Today many of his stage works are lost and he is best known for a substantial body of chamber works, among them a dozen quintets for piano and wind instruments. This opening instalment of a projected series includes the only such work scored for piano, horn, clarinet, oboe and bassoon, the same combination as Mozart's K452 and Beethoven's op. 16. It is an expansive three-movement work published in Leipzig in 1810 as op. 41, at which time it was also issued as piano quintet with strings (op. 40), probably the original version. An attractive work, it is dominated by the piano part, which tends to leave the winds in a supporting role that never approaches the idiomatic freedom afforded them in Mozart's masterpiece. It is given a fine performance, led by Steven Devine's fluent playing on a Johann Fritz fortepiano of 1815 from the Finchcocks' collection.

The generously timed CD also includes two substantial three-movement sonatas, one for piano and horn (in E flat, op. 28 published in 1804), the other for piano and clarinet in B flat (1817-18). For the most part op. 28 concentrates on the more lyrical, Romantic characteristics of the horn, while the fine piece for clarinet not unexpectedly contrasts the instrument's ability to spin out long, liquid cantabiles with its agility. Both sonatas feature spirited finales providing opportunities for the percussion additions to the Fritz. Anneke Scott (horn) and Jane Booth (clarinet) play them with considerable accomplishment, the disc as a whole being a persuasive opening to what promises to be an engaging series. *Brian Robins*

*A second copy of this disc was sent directly to another of our regulars, so here is his review:*

A product of the Mannheim school, Danzi moved with the court orchestra to Munich in 1784 eventually being elevated from cellist to assistant Kapellmeister, later moving to the courts at Stuttgart and Karlsruhe. His music is attractive and, on the strength of this recording, deserves to be better known. Sonatas for fortepiano and horn (Op.28) and clarinet (Op.54) feature Anneke Scott and Jane Booth, both on exquisite form. They are joined by James Eastaway (oboe) and Ursula Leveaux (bassoon) for the Quintet in D (Op. 41). But in all the pieces it is the fortepiano that is in the lead, played here by Steven

Devine. Incidentally, the CD comes from the fledgling Devine Music label, the Devine being the said Steven. He also hosted the recording at the Finchcocks Collection of Keyboard Instruments (the home of the featured 1815 Fritz fortepiano) where he is Director of Development. This is an excellent recording of a fascinating repertoire from a fine, if perhaps not great, composer. *Andrew Benson-Wilson*

**Hummel / Schubert Piano Quintets** The Music Collection (Simon Standage vn, Peter Collyer vla, Poppy Walshaw vlc, Elizabeth Bradley db, Susan Alexander-Max fp, dir) 64' 56"  
Chandos Chaconne CHAN 0800  
Hummel Op. 87 Schubert D. 667

While Hummel's op. 87 is never going to emulate *The Trout* in the popularity stakes, it is not exactly a stranger to the catalogue, frequently appearing in harness with the evergreen Schubert. Indeed the unusual scoring for both works has led to much as yet unresolved scholarly debate as to the likelihood or otherwise of the influence of the Hummel on the Schubert. The present recording of the coupling was made at Finchcocks on a Viennese Johann Fritz fortepiano (1814) in the collection there, thus strictly speaking a more authentic instrument than the 1822 Erard used by Cyril Huvé in the closest rival to the new disc, the 1990 recording made by Hausmusik (EMI). But there I feel the advantage tends to end. The dry acoustic at Finchcock's has always presented a problem to recording engineers and here I don't feel they have been overcome. While the tone of Fritz is lovely across its gamut, the string tone, especially in tuttis, often sounds dry and intonation is at times suspect. But the EMI performances, too, I think have the edge for their tangible degree of greater finesse and insight. That said, there is much here to enjoy, above all the obvious affection these performers bring to the music, the sheer pleasure of playing it, while with the exception of the opening movement of the Hummel, where the first subject of the opening movement sounds a bit dogged rather than 'risoluto', tempi are well judged. And let's face it, Schubert ensured that any half-decent account of the 'The Trout' would beguile its listener. This one is much more than that. *Brian Robins*

#### ANTHOLOGIES

**An Immortal Legacy** The Sixteen, Harry Christophers 67' 04"  
Coro COR16111  
Music by Britten, Byrd, Chilcott, Gibbons, MacMillan, Morley, Tallis, Tippett

This is the CD of last year's tour programme which I picked up earlier this year

in the Usher Hall in Edinburgh as part of the Edinburgh International Festival, or at least parts of it. Disappointingly in the year of its 500th anniversary, they have dropped Robert Carver's *Missa Dum sacrum mysterium* in favour of some rather random sounding English madrigals. They have retained some music by James MacMillan and added some Britten for his centenary as well as some Tippett. The CD confirms several positive aspects of this fine choir as well as highlighting a couple of weaknesses.

Generally speaking the performances are very idiomatic and convincing, and the fact that the programme includes music of such marked diversity this is no idle boast. We have simple English Psalms, spirituals, madrigals and full scale motets in a bewildering range of vocal styles all sung beautifully. However this is also one of the weaknesses – not all of this music wants the same sort of choral beauty. At the Edinburgh concert and again listening to the CD, I felt that the Tallis tunes for Archbishop Parker's Psalter were presented to us like nouvelle cuisine – tiny simple portions exquisitely plated up for us to gaze at in reverential wonder. Nothing could take us further from this deeply functional music and seemed to me to betray it. As performers, we felt nearest these works when singing these tunes using genuine rasping Tudor English and with a bit of a vocal edge, and after that the plummily pious accounts here just sound precious. I also feel that the days of full-choir madrigals, even sung as precisely as they are here, are long past. Of the remaining music the Renaissance church music by Tallis and Byrd is beautifully sung. The music by James MacMillan, with whom the choir has worked closely, is also completely convincing. To me the Britten Choral Dances from *Gloriana* and Tippett Spirituals from *A Child of our Time* are less convincing. Perhaps I am expressing my own antipathy to such mixed programmes, but I do think that that we are hearing the Sixteen spread rather thin here over repertoire which I have heard sung better by more specialist groups.

D. James Ross

The 2014 Choral Pilgrimage CD, a more homogenous programme with no hymns, is reviewed on p. 19. There are three Tallis hymns that most people know: Tallis's *Canon*, Tallis's *Ordinal*, and the *Third Tune* familiar to anyone who knows the Vaughan Williams *Fantasy*. The *Canon* can be sung with an entry every four notes (perhaps to the long meter doxology) while the other two need four-part settings and words in the programme. Those who can't read music can sing the tunes at either octave, those who can read music, can sing in four parts. Sing loudly with an edge! We don't know how hymns were sung in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but there's a lot of evidence for the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century (before Ancient and Modern respectability and dynamics, even in words-only versions), and audiences will feel involved, but can also stretch their legs. CB

*Hommage à trois* William Berger bar, Carolyn Sampson Sm Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Nicholas McGegan 68' 29" Linn Records CKD428  
Extracts from Cimarosa, Haydn & Mozart

I have been impressed with William Berger's live singing (and acting) as he raged, melted and burnt and sang his way across the Styx. In what seems to be a *Hommage à Berger* (rather than Mozart, Haydn and Cimarosa), his own introductory note (during which he thanks his mother, several "surrogate moms", and dedicates the recording to his late great-aunt) Berger reveals that his debut disc 'Insomnia' was a semi-biographical memoir of his own heartbreak. Things seem to have been changed for him, as this disc is dedicated to musical extracts reflecting various operatic Lotharios, hedonists, lovers and jokers. A *Ménage* rather than *Hommage* is suggested by the semi-naked photograph of a gleeful Berger in bed with a similarly clad man and woman (McGegan and Sampson?) reinforcing the image that the *Guardian* reviewer has of Berger as a "heart-throb baritone" and this as a "discreetly sexy disc". *Discreet* is not the word for Haydn's "Quel tuo visetto amabile" (from *Orlando paladina*) where Carolyn Sampson him to the climactic *conclus* elicits little gasps from Berger as she leads ion when "the horse and rider cannot be stopped". Indeed, it is the Haydn extracts that were the most interesting for me, along with Cimarosa's comic monologue of the Maestro di Cappella berating his orchestra. The singing from Berger (and Sampson) is impressive without being overdone, and McGegan shows his skills at bringing a classical idiom to modern instrument orchestras. Andrew Benson-Wilson

*Rejoice, the Lord is King: Great Hymns from Westminster Abbey* The Choir of Westminster Abbey, Robert Quinney org, James O'Donnell cond. 68' 45" Hyperion CDA68013

22 Hymns in 68 minutes – just over three minutes a hymn: the listener is either bored by so many so he starts reading a book, falls asleep or turns it off. Hymns are not intended to be sung consecutively. The sensible way to listen is to read the generous introduction to each hymn, play it, then stop and read the next one. And if you want to join in, the texts are there to help – though I reckon I could sing most of them without looking. But I do find excess variation irritating – one might almost call the treatment of the title hymn, with Handel's tune to "Rejoice the Lord is King", desecration. And the Vaughan Williams *Old Hundredth* doesn't work with organ as well as the 1953 Coronation. Hymns (late arrivals to

Anglican services) are for congregations, and with no congregation, the choirs naturally want to do something a bit more sophisticated. I'm sure this will sell well in the Abbey, and some non-singers, the bed-ridden or the tone deaf might enjoy it. Hymns are one aspect of the lost communal music-making. (It seems that there will be an organised revival of Music Hall and marching songs.) Congratulations to the choir for the diction and the straightforward singing. Perhaps the organist should follow an 18th-century convention and alternate verses between loud and soft! CB

#### REPACKAGING

Various companies have started the new year with the release of boxed sets. Harmonia Mundi's are devoted to single composers and cover the full range of their output. We were sent *Handel*: René Jacobs' *Giulio Cesare* and *Messiah*, Nicholas McGegan's *Water Musick*, sacred music by Marcus Creed, the AAM's Op. 3 concerti under Richard Egarr, and an Andreas Scholl recital of famous arias – 8 CDs, 9h 52m 29s HMX 2908417.24

*Mozart* René Jacobs' *Cosi fan tutte* and *Symphonies 40 & 41*, Herreweghe's *Requiem* and *Grand Partita*, and performances by The English Concert under Andrew Manze and the Freiburger Barockorchester under Gottfried von der Goltz, as well as Werner Güra singing songs and piano concertos with the Salzburg Camerata – 8 CDs, 9h 19m 10s HMX 2908409.16.

*Brahms* had two period items, the natural horn in the *Horn Trio*, and Herreweghe *Requiem*, but the other discs feature distinguished performances of chamber and symphonic works, as well as songs and piano music – 8 CDs, 10h 20m 12s HMX 2908401.08). The sets are beautifully presented with quality illustrated booklets giving full details of the performances, as well as information about the repertoire and the composer. They would make ideal gifts.

Naïve's approach is slightly different; to celebrate their 15th birthday, they have paired off recordings to highlight the work of one of their "house artistes". Without exception, all the CDs have been favourably reviewed in these pages, so they need little comment from me. (They all have the prefix 8-22186). Rinaldo Alessandrini is represented by a pairing of his version of Monteverdi's sixth book of madrigals and his exploration of the instrumental repertoire around 1600 (40042-5), Sandrine Piau's gorgeous *Between Heaven and Earth* is coupled with *Arias & Duets* (with Sara Mingardo, 40037-1), Marie-Nicole Lemieux sings Handel (also featuring Karina Gauvin) and later French repertoire with the Orchestre National de France (40039-5).

Marc Minkowski also concentrates on Handel (*A Song for St Cecilia's Day* with Lucy Crowe and Richard Croft, and the *Water Music* 40038-8), and the ensemble accentus performs Mendelssohn's *Christus* on one disc and a programme of transcriptions on the other (40043-2). These are simple re-packagings – a neatly designed double width sleeve holds the two original releases (some in cellophane wrappers), complete with full booklets. If you missed these excellent recordings first time around, this is a very cheap way to pick them up now. BC

The Complete Alpha Recordings of L'Arpeggiata (Christina Pluhar) were on sale at the Cathedral Bookshop in Aachen quite cheaply. There are six discs in a box, with full lists of pieces and performers, but instead of texts or anything about the programmes, there is a series of "guess the portraits", since they are not captioned. The contents are: Kapsberger, Landi, Cavalieri *Rappresentazione...* (2 CDs), *La Tareantella*, and *All'Improvviso*, recordings from 2000-04. I haven't played them yet, but even if Pluhar often infuriates (but more so in her later performances), they are worth hearing: she and her colleagues have amazing improvisatory imaginations. (£29.00 or \$29.00 are the prices on the www – but I'm sure it was much cheaper in Germany, despite being released only a week before I bought it.)

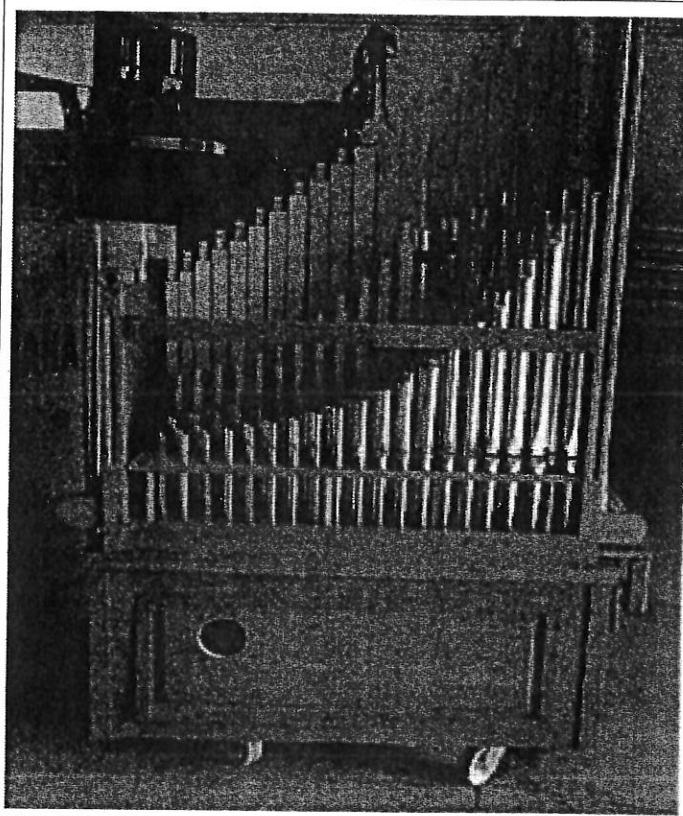
And we happened to hear a batch of buskers the other side of the cathedral who sounded quite impressive, so we bought the disc of the Neva Brass Quintet of (as one might guess) Saint-Petersburg. They have a German agent, so visitors may come across them. Typically, *Amazing grace* is known in St Petersburg (in a fine jazz version), but despite its popularity as one of the most recognizable Christian hymns in the English-speaking world (according to Wikipedia), it doesn't seem so famous in Westminster Abbey! [The words are late 18th-century English, the tune early 19<sup>th</sup> American.] CB

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Apologies to AAM

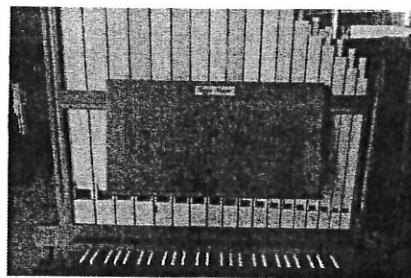
I should have reviewed *Birth of the Symphony: Handel to Haydn* (AAM with Richard Egarr) in December, if not October. I played it often. The performances are fine, but I reckon that the *Saul* overture is too *sui generis* to fit the theme. Other pieces are Richter *Symphony 7 in C*, Johann Stamitz *Sinfonia a4 in D*, Mozart *Symphony 1* and Haydn *La Passione*. CB

## EARLY KEYBOARDS FOR SALE

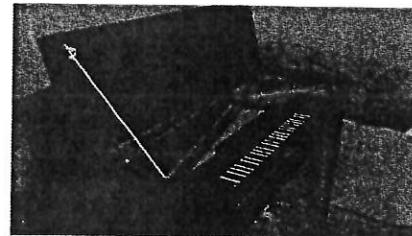
Italian organist and harpsichordist Laura Cerutti is selling four of her instruments. All are in good working order and have featured on her many CD recordings. As well as the two instruments shown, Laura is offering a harpsichord for €12,000 and a clavichord for €3500. Additional costs for transport. Enquiries in the first instance to lauracerutti7@gmail.com



Above and below: A 56-key chamber organ with removable upper by Hugo Mayer. In matt-lacquered light oak, the range is CC-g'' with 8' (wood), 4' and 2' (metal) flutes. The asking price is €35,000



Right: square piano €6500



## New Material about Byrd in CD Booklets

Richard Turbet

This is one of a continuing series of occasional articles containing Byrd miscellanea, which Clifford has kindly agreed to publish following my decision to wind up the Annual Byrd newsletter (all ten issues of which are available as a single monograph from The Early Music Company) and its successor column "Byrd on a wire".

In issues 6 and 7 of the Newsletter (2000-1, pages 12 and 6 respectively) I published details of LP sleeve notes and CD booklets which contain original research or findings about Byrd's music. The present article contains news of three findings about Byrd in two subsequent CD booklets, which are the work of the leading Byrd performer and scholar Andrew Carwood, relating to recordings made by his choir The Cardinall's Musick on the Hyperion label.

On pages 3-4 accompanying their recording of *William Byrd: the Great Service* on CDA67937, released in 2012, Andrew notes what he believes to be two borrowings by younger contemporaries of Byrd from the work. In the first of these, Weelkes quotes Byrd's passage "and the rich" from the Magnificat when setting "Heaven and earth" in the Te Deum of his *First Service*. This is the more tenuous of these two observations. In the *Great Service* Byrd sets these words, several times, to a different phrase except just the once, in the tenor, where he uses the phrase consisting of three notes that reappears in Weelkes's *Te Deum*. Here, it appears once as in the *Great Service* (and is then repeated with one different note) at the start of a treble verse. The phrase in question – simply a descending octave with the fifth as the middle note – is conventional for depicting "heaven and earth" in Renaissance music, and it could well be that Weelkes was composing somewhat on automatic pilot, or simply felt like challenging his treble soloist to negotiate the octave in two vocal strides. Weelkes's passage is, of course, exposed, whereas Byrd's is concealed amongst eloquent polyphony, so it would seem that any homage from a putative pupil might be a deliberately covert reference.

In his other such observation in this booklet, Andrew suggests, convincingly, that Gibbons reuses the phrase "all the days of our life" from the Benedictus for the words "Glory be to the Father" in his anthem a8 *O clap your hands*. There is no surviving evidence that Gibbons was a pupil of Byrd, despite unsubstantiated statements made in print by Philip Brett (of all people; subsequently recanted by him, informally) and others, but a clear borrowing such as this set alongside the homage, in his own *Second Service*, to Byrd's raises at least the possibility that Gibbons might have been personally taught by Byrd, as well as having impersonally learned from him.

The second CD booklet in question accompanies the recording by The Cardinall's Musick of Tallis's *Missa Puer natus est nobis* and other sacred music including the free-standing Benedictus a4 for men's voices, released in March

2014 on CDA68026. On pages 5-6, Andrew suggests, again convincingly, that Byrd thought sufficiently highly of Tallis's piece to reuse the melody of "which hath been since the world began" in his *Great Service*. There were many different aspects to the development of Anglican music in the Tudor and Stuart periods. One of these aspects concerns the appearance of a passage or passages from the work of one composer in the work of another. We still know too little about the culture of borrowing and homage in Renaissance music and how it filtered down to the likes of early Anglican music, so all three of Andrew's perceptive observations in these two booklets provide valuable and thought-provoking examples.

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## WINTON DEAN

(18 March 1916 – 10 December 2013)

Clifford Bartlett

The book that has, I think, been the most useful to me is Winton Dean's *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques*. This was published in 1959, I found a reduced copy for £5.00 in Heffers, and I don't know how I could have managed without it. I had already got the Handel Opera and Oratorio bug. The Handel Opera Society began in 1955, alternating operas and oratorios. I first saw *Alcina* in 1957 (with Joan Sutherland – my first experience of a virtuosic soprano) and *Theodora* in 1958 (with Vaughan Williams sitting a few rows in front of me – another hero to whom I was too shy to speak).<sup>1</sup> I saw most of the productions until 1983, by when I couldn't face the 1960s baroque style. Staged operas seem in the early revival years to have been staged not too far from what Handel expected, but oratorios were often (and still are) an embarrassment when the choruses appeared, though they can sometimes work.<sup>2</sup> Winton had ideas of staging oratorio in the 1930s, but they are a risk. Unless the direction is in the hands of someone who understands the music and who discusses matters with the conductor, oratorios are best left on a concert stage. Some recent oratorio concert performances are much more dramatic, with shaping of scenes – even *Messiah* gains from following the "scenes" of the libretto.

Winton's first book on Handel's operas was based on a series of lectures in Berkeley, *Handel and the Opera Seria* (1969), an important book at the time, but lacking the wealth of information in *Handel's Operas 1704-1726* (in collaboration with John Merrill Knapp) published in 1987 and *Handel's Operas 1726-1741* without collaboration, in 2006. These followed the same pattern as the Oratorio book, with a few general chapters preceding the first volume. The order is:

Introduction to plot, libretto and music, with no heading.  
 History and Text  
 Autograph  
 Librettos  
 Copies and Editions

Far more changes were made to the operas than the oratorios, so much that all available sources were considered. (Only the major sources were covered in *Handel's Dramatic Operas and Masques*). HHA has only recently produced opera editions based on thorough comparison of the sources, so performers are likely to depend on Winton's study of the MSS for a good number of years hence. All conductors and stage directors should read the relevant chapter before coming up with silly ideas about production! A few work brilliantly, but so often we have an orchestra trying to sound like Handel's, singers having difficulty making an attempt to perform in

uncomfortable postures and costumes (or lack of them), and audiences not relating what they see with what they hear. I wish I'd kept a file of Winton's reviews!

Winton was, in fact, a brilliant reviewer, chiefly in *Opera Magazine* and *The Musical Times*. He also wrote a fine article in *The New Grove* on CRITICISM, partly historical, but with many sensible comments on reviewing – though the complication of mixing vastly different styles (and I don't just refer to the difficult music of the avant garde of the 1960s) makes the all-purpose "classical" critic difficult to relate to everything. In the early music world, for instance, critics should be more aware of such matters of performance practice as the difference between Bach and Handel's chorus. Handel had more-or-less that of a modern chamber choir, but the evidence of Bach's surviving material offers no hint that Bach had more than individual soloists for cantatas and passions: people who one expects to look at the evidence find ways of ignoring the obvious. Handel oratorios are still performed by large choirs and orchestras, which can often be very effective – I mentioned the effect of the first performance of my/OUP's *Messiah* edition by the Huddersfield Choral Society recently.

I've occasionally said a brief word or two to Winton, but have never had a conversation – perhaps because I didn't move among the expert Handelians, though I've probably edited more than most. I wish I'd thought of contacting him when I was involved in semi-staging Bizet's complete music for *L'Arlésienne* with the five-act play reduced for an actress and an actor, but I'd never been enthusiastic about Bizet, and did not read Winton's *Georges Bizet, His Life and Work* (1948, revised 1965).

Basil Dean (1888-1978) was a man of stage and screen, with a distinguished career. Winton was educated at Harrow and King's College, Cambridge, but retained the dramatic awareness of his father. This was integral to his Handelian studies. He was minimally involved in producing editions. The exception was *Giulio Cesare*. Had the OUP edition been produced in the 1960s, it would have been useful, but the third proofs were done by the end of the 1960s yet the publication date was 1998! (I was involved in sorting out the piles of proofs.) Its great merit is the inclusion of all alternative settings, but I find my own edition (prepared for Masaaki Suzuki in 2005 and typeset by Brian Clark: score £30.00) avoids editorial adjustments to vocal lines: cadences are part of the grammar, so don't need marking, while other embellishments get boring if sung the same every time. A pity that there was no edition to round off Winton's mastery of the notes and meanings of Handel's large-scale works.

CB

1. Some decades later, I edited *Alcina* & *Theodora*.

2. The performance of *Samson* at Buxton in 2009 was very impressive.