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## Valletta International Baroque Festival

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Having visited three concerts of the Valletta International Baroque Festival last month, I will begin at the last of them, the Bach *St John Passion* (14<sup>th</sup> Jan). There are many churches that can be used for concerts there, and the large Co-Cathedral of St John's was entirely suitable, though the organs to left and right on the East wall would have been too high to relate to the performers on the ground: instead, we had Robert Howarth on chamber organ amidst the singers and players. It was packed (I tried to calculate the capacity – perhaps around 800), and it was a bit of a strain to arrive half an hour early to get a rather small seat and then remain there without a break until the end – only a few people slipped away early. The performance was impressive, Steven Devine was the conductor, and Judy Tarling led The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. The Evangelist Nicholas Mulroy was dramatic, and Matthew Brook, as expected, was a powerful Christ. I wondered if the Evangelist and Christ plus another organ might, ideally, have been placed in the substantial pulpit in a couple of bays on the north side, separating them from the other singers. Much to my surprise, Clare Wilkinson wasn't clearly audible in "Von den Strikken" (the score is properly called alto, whereas Clare had become a mezzo soprano and the translation was labelled as counter-tenor!) However, she made up in "Es ist vollbracht", especially at the two statements that frame the closing four bars – I know the aria well, but I'd never reacted so strongly at that brief recapitulation. The other two soloists – Julia Doyle and Samuel Evans – were fine.

Despite the use of a choir, it did work very well, and the dramatic narratives were extremely powerful. I always find the last two recits a let-down, but to make up for it we have the closing mollifying chorus, to be followed by one of Bach's most extraordinary chorales. The version in Cantata 149 is effective under normal terms, but here it has a new power and the pitch is raised a minor third, offering an enormous expectation of the Resurrection. I'm not saying that this is the best ever performance, but it completely convinced me!

## REVIEWS OF MUSIC

Clifford Bartlett

## FILLING THE GAP

*Secular Polyphony, 1380-1480* edited by David Fallows. (*Musica Britannica*, 97). Stainer & Bell, 2014. xliii + 313pp, £120.00.

This is rather a gap in my knowledge. I produced a collection of English music up to the early 14<sup>th</sup> century in 1961, inspired by my English supervisor John Stevens and I joined his choir when we moved to within reach of Cambridge. John claimed that his understanding of early French was running a week or so ahead of teaching us! He covered MB 4, 18 & 36, and this new volume fills the gap as stated in the title – presumable “secular” can cover non-liturgical music.

Back in 1952, *Musica Britannica* 4 (Carols) was printed in small note-values, probably based primarily on Thurston Dart's insistence on reduction. Some recent editions of the period have insisted in making the notation as unchanged as possible but MB 97 does not confuse the reader and singer when a change of notation isn't obvious. David began his research in Munich in 1968-70, then in California in 1970-73, and it was finished some 45 years later. I have always been impressed by his work, and this must surely be among the best.

Texts are a serious problems. The page happened to open on No.30 (*Resurexit victor mortis*), which had no underlay. The notes are described “texted” for the top part, but underlay looks problematic and is not set. The volume is not intended to be specifically for English text: if there are English connections, French and Latin are included. The music ends at page 175 and the commentaries take up another 138 pages, sensibly set out without columns so that the information can be flexible, especially when there are French and English texts. The layout is sensible, most pieces fitting a page and rarely with awkward page-turns. The 124 pieces are divided into 17 sections + a dozen *O rosa bellas*. Once upon a time, the BBC would broadcast new excerpts of new editions like this – those who still have connections with the organisation should encourage performance!

## TALLIS &amp; BYRD

Thomas Tallis & William Byrd *Cantiones Sacrae 1575* transcribed and edited by John Milsom (*Early English Church Music*, 56). Stainer & Bell, 2014. xliii + 449pp, £120.00.

My immediate reaction was: why does the Tallis and Byrd have nearly 500 pages, but MB97 (see above) for the same price have 356 pages? MB97 is perhaps esoteric, but many of the pieces were not published and those that were deserved to be placed in a coherent volume. Apart from finance, this T&B edition is unperformable. Some motets are printed as usual, others have one system on the

current EECM page with a second or even third alternative below. The weighty volume (2.620 kg) makes singing virtually impossible, unless each singer has a substantial book-rest. In fact, I finally managed it with four pillows on a double bed.

The editorial information, both general and for each motet, is invaluable. Excluding prelims, facsimiles and translations of prose and lists of sources, 21 double-column pages, which all who are interested in the 1575 publications should read. Also, each piece is introduced, sometimes in several pages, with comments also relating to details in the various copies of the publication, of earlier versions and of other later sources that might have some relevance.

I'm not going to question every little point, but one example is quite early in the book: No. 1, cantus bars 7 and repeated at 16. There is a B flat signature for part one, but an E flat as well for the other parts. There is a descending phrase from B flat to the D below, with the preceding E notated flat; then, on the way up to A, the editor adds an E flat to match the notated one. But the editorial E flat feels wrong to me: an E flat fits less well filling the phrase D E F G A. The editor does not add E flats at 7 & 16.

I'm puzzled by the desire to omit barlines. Modern singers don't necessarily expect the tactus, and by this period, scores (of which few exist till the end of the century) are usually barred through the system. With texts, it's better only to bar the staves, not the gaps between. However, I doubt if anything can be changed.

If you don't have a big book-rest or can manoeuvre a bed, there are other solutions. Print the 1575 source in the normal way, perhaps with Tallis and Byrd in separate books. Use a web-site and scan all the music pages as they now stand. Reformat the introductory material, both general and that for individual motets, and present it as a normal book rather than the current size. More generally, don't aim so obviously merely at academics – performers (conductors at least) need access as well.

There's an extensive amount of information, and I have no problems with that. I just wish that musicologists could go beyond their own desires.

## FROBERGER V.2

Froberger *New Edition of the Complete Works V.2. Keyboard and Organ Works from Copied Sources, Polyphonic Works...* edited by Siegbert Rampe. Bärenreiter BA 9212, 2014. xxii + 100pp, £41.50

This completes the six volumes (nos 3-6 each having two parts): there remains to complete the series with vol. VII containing vocal motets, dubious instrumental pieces and a catalogue (FbWV). Time is a bit short this January, so I won't go into details, but any Froberger enthusiasts will want to buy this.

## ASCENSION ORATORIO

**J. S. Bach *Himmelfahrts-Oratorium/Ascension Oratorio* BWV 11...** Edited by Paul Brainard. Bärenreiter TP1011, 2014. vi + 73pp, £10.00. also Vocal Score, BA 10011-90, 2014. .v + 46pp, £7.50. Also available: hardback score £59.00, wind set £13.50, organ £11.00, Strings each £3.50.

This is primarily noted to show that the edition is now available, 37 years after Brainard's edition of the Collected Works II vol. 8. The study score is preceded by a short introduction by Andreas Glöckner, taken from the 1999 study edition: it's a pity that the four facsimile pages are omitted in 2014, but it is good that the performance material is available. The work was performed from 19 May 1735, following the Christmas Oratorio around Dec. 1734 to Jan. 1735: Bach seems to have shown more interest in oratorios at this period. The edition includes the recitative basses with shortened notes. In the score, the continuo held to long notes – or did the string bass cut to the same length as the organ? Unlike the abrupt organ, the cello can fade away so that the exact length is flexible. In the Breitkopf edition (1969/1997), the shortened recitative organ part isn't included.

## HANDEL SOLOMON

**Handel *Solomon: Oratorio in three Acts*, HWV 67...** Piano reduction by Andreas Köhs. Bärenreiter (BA 10709-90), 2014. xi + 338pp, £41.50.

This is welcome. The only vocal scores I have is the Vincent Novello of around 1850 and the larger-print Novello edition, which omits some movements. We had a bit of a fuss the weekend before I wrote this – I quoted an organisation in Poland for score & parts, and added the cost of vocal and chorus scores, but was only asked to send score and parts. Then there was an urgent request for the vocal scores while we holidayed in Malta! Paul McCreesh (who was directing the Polish performance preferred our old materials) so the new Bärenreiter vocal score wasn't needed then.

The new edition is elegant and presumably more accurate (though that's something I'd rather check with the full score). On practical terms, the Vincent Novello VSc is about a third shorter, though it has an A4 format, so more page-space. We produce photocopies at £30.00, and they seem to lay flat open slightly more effectively than the new score (though I wouldn't offer any guarantee!) Musically, there might be some advantage in the cueing of instruments in the c.1850 VSc, such as the opening of Act III, bars 6, 8 & 9, but bars 7 and 10 also need cues. The instruments playing, though, could be listed at the foot of the page. Bärenreiter is 50% heavier than our c.1850 copy, and that includes the libretto.

I'm being practical here. I'd probably use the Chrysander score if I were listening with intent, but Bärenreiter Vsc would be preferable if I wanted to know that the notes were right!

Bärenreiter announced in their Newsletter (Jan 2015), which reached my file on the 26<sup>th</sup>, that the full score of Solomon is available in 2 vols, HHA 1/27, BA 10709-01,

price £499.00 – at least Handel is cheaper than Rossini's *Le comte Ory*, which costs £826.50.

## BACH

**Bach *O Jesu Christ, meins Lebens Licht... Motet for Chorus and Instruments*, BWV 118...** 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Versions.. edited by Wolfram Ensslin Breitkopf & Härtel (P-B 4618), 2014. [vi] + 14pp, £11.90. + combined version vocal score (ChB 4618 12pp, £5.00. Parts also available.)

This is somewhat of a hybrid. First it was placed as Cantata 118, then it was placed with the motets, after which various pieces which didn't fit either were questioned, but I suppose that motets have a connection with a relationship with funeral music. I remember a run through at a summer school in 2000, which was played and sung, probably without rehearsal, commemorating Bach's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. We were there for earlier music, and certainly had cornetti and three trombones and produced some equivalent to a pair of litui. They, of course, are the problem which discourages performances, but use imagination! The text first appeared anonymously as a funeral hymn, with 15 verses – you should know it well by the end. When putting the new score away with my older ones, I found a bundle of Francis and June Baines memorial with the vocal sections in each programme – 20 June 1999.

**Bach *Matthäus-Passion...* in the versions of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Berlin 1829 and Leipzig 1841, BWV 244...** Edited (and piano reduction) by Klaus Winkler. Bärenreiter (9088-90), 2014. xv + 258 pp, £31.00.

I gather that there has been a performance recently, though I'd be more excited had I seen Mendelssohn's instrumentation. It is interesting to see recits with the right hand in the bass clef – why is that so rarely done?

**Bach *Sonata for Violin and Harpsichord (Viola da gamba ad lib.) in G minor, BWV 1030a...* Reconstruction by Klaus Hofmann. (Herbipol.) Breitkopf 32pp + 2 parts, £14.90. EB 8452.**

There have been several versions of the more familiar work better known as a sonata in B minor for flute and harpsichord obbligato. The violin is essential, since the violin goes down to the bottom string. What is odd about the bass is the first movement – the other movements do no go below gamba bottom D. The lower depths in the first movement are more likely to suggest that the Cembalo part was enough, since a gamba with bottom G (a fifth below the instrument's lowest note otherwise) is unlikely to play well on top. The “keyboard” part may have been played by a lute-clavier. However, it does seem quite complicated, and the only clear evidence of the Cembalo part, was written out in the 1770s. Personally, I'm not too convinced, and if you have violin and keyboard, send the gamba home! Incidentally, I've never managed to work out what Herbipol. stands for – Herbipolitan sounds plausible!



## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

Brian Robins &amp; CB

*Tim Eggington The Advancement of Music in Enlightenment England: Benjamin Cooke and the Academy of Ancient Music.* Boydell and Brewer, 2014 xiii + 303 pp, £60. ISBN 978 1 84383 906 4

The foundation of the Academy of Ancient (initially Vocal) Music in January 1726 is one of the seminal moments in the story of English 18th century music. Formed, in the words of one its founder members, 'chiefly for the performance of Grave ancient Vocal musick', the Academy (AAM) was the first formally organised society to capitalize on the interest in the music of earlier times first encountered in the latter part of the 17th century. Subsequently emulated by such institutions as the Madrigal Society (1741), the Concert of Antient Music, and (to a lesser extent) the Catch Club, the AAM remained for most of its existence unique as a professional body devoted to the didactic exploration of old music rather than being a public concert-giving organisation. Crucially, far from being merely a dry archaeological exercise, the re-discovery of the music of earlier centuries led to many of the composers of the AAM attempting to incorporate elements of the *stile antico* into their own works. Key among such figures was Johann Christoph Pepusch, a founding member and the guiding spirit of the AAM in its early years. Of Pepusch's many pupils and acolytes, none played a more important role in the later story of the AAM than Benjamin Cooke, who would become not only its director, but whose music would to a significant degree come to incorporate many of the organisations ideals.

Born in London in 1734, Cooke's professional career revolved around his association with Westminster Abbey, initially as Master of the Choristers, then from 1762, as organist. The recipient of doctorates from both Cambridge and Oxford, Cooke's academic leanings are evident in his interests in 'ancient' music and membership of not only the AAM, but also the Madrigal Society and professional membership of the Catch Club. As a composer, his music is little known today, making it difficult to reach firm conclusions regarding its quality. But it seems likely that it is his glees and part songs that represent Cooke at his best (*Epitaph on a Dormouse*, one of the few Cooke works to have been recorded, is a beautifully crafted example), though in his discussion of works that he believes fit the AAM's aesthetic objectives, Tim Eggington makes a strong argument for the large-scale setting of William Collins' *Ode to the Passions* to be considered Cooke's masterpiece.

It is the relationship between that aesthetic and Cooke's position within its precepts that form the major thrust of this interesting new study. For Eggington, the AAM's didactic interest in old music was not simply academic interest, but also a practical inspiration to advance music as a serious science rather than the ephemeral

entertainment provided by the 'modern' music so bitterly opposed by Hawkins (himself a member of the AAM) and others. In this sense, believes Eggington, the AAM's agenda was Janus-faced, both looking back toward the past, while also attempting to incorporate the best of that past into the future of music. It's an interesting proposition, though I remain unconvinced that the author provides persuasive evidence that the AAM had a clear agenda to advance music. Rather it is surely true that certain of its objectives would quite coincidentally find voice not in England, but in the Viennese Classical style that evolved from the modern works so despised by Hawkins.

While Eggington has valuable points to make, there are too many occasions on which an informed reader might feel a closer acquaintance with some of his sources might have been helpful. The discussion and analysis of the *Ode to the Passions* would have benefited from more comparison with the earlier setting of 1750 by William Hayes (which can be heard on record), particularly given that both Hayes and Cooke respond strongly to the overt mimetic potential of Collins' poem, expected in the case of the former, but more surprising in that of Cooke, who was more interested in harmony than imitation as a mode of expression. There are, too, a number of factual slips in addition to questionable assertions: the performance of *L'Allegro* described by John Marsh took place in 1779, not 1780 (p. 55, n. 39); while Handel arrived in London in 1710, not 1704 (p. 96), and Boyce's serenata is *Solomon*, not *Soloman* (p.84). The Madrigal Society might have started out as proletarian, but certainly did not remain so (p. 79). At least in Britain, the concerto grosso was not fully ousted by newer modern forms until well into the 19th century (p. 69), neither is it strictly accurate to say that Burney *transferred* (my italics) from practical musician to historian (125), since he remained titular organist of Chelsea Hospital until his death. These and other inaccuracies detract from a book that although somewhat dryly written – the chapter devoted to Cooke's treatise *Musical Conjectures* (1769) is to my mind particularly indigestible – is nonetheless a valuable addition to the slowly growing bibliography relating to 18th century English music. The discussion of key works by Cooke is accompanied by well-produced musical examples and the appendices include a complete listing of Cooke's compositions.

Brian Robins

## GANT'S CAROLS

*Andrew Gant Christmas Carols From Village Green to Church Choir* Profile Books, 2014. 247 pp, £9.99. ISBN 978 1 78125 352 6

This is the opposite to the New Oxford Book of Carols, which aims at an authentic source if possible, with 201



carols many with more than one version and thorough but concise commentaries. Gant has 22 items, which sometimes give more information than NOBC, though Gant's sometimes meandering text does offer much more information in a casual manner. There are a variety of illustrations, but mostly too small, especially the 1582 *Personet hodie*. The weakness is the music arrangements. Some of them seem neither ancient nor modern. The Greensleeves tune (*What child is this*) is an example of accepting Vaughan Williams and ignoring the 16/17<sup>th</sup> century major chords, while anyone who knows the standard bass patterns will know what to do with it:-- EDEB | EDEB | | GDEB | GDeBE | | (E is minor except at the end, B is major). It's a useful book, with a good index, though no bibliography. The book was sold at under half price in Tesco; I didn't see the CD, but it was too late for the December issue anyway.

#### RALPH KIRKPATRICK

*Ralph Kirkpatrick Letters of the American Harpsichordist and Scholar Ralph Kirkpatrick* edited by Meredith Kirkpatrick University of Rochester Press, 2914. xv + 186pp, £00.00. ISBN 978 1 58046 5

My only experience of Kirkpatrick's live concerts was, ironically, two (in different years) in the BBC Maida Vale main studio in the mid-1960s with Elliott Carter's Double Concerto with piano (probably Charles Rosen) and harpsichord (Ralph Kirkpatrick), each accompanied by a small ensemble. I didn't make much of it. His most important book was his Domenico Scarlatti (Princeton UP, 1953), a book that has worn well for over 60 years. It's a book that can be read, yet also has shaped Scarlatti's works by his K numbers.

The Letters are a mixture of RK and his friends, set out in such a way that when possible, sections of chronological groups, the most interesting and substantial being his early letters as he studied in Europe in the 1930s and studied with Nadia Boulanger and Wanda Landowska, the latter not being completely ideal as a teacher! He first visited the Dolmetsches in 1932, his first words on writing to his family beginning "I found a humpshouldered little old man with long scraggly white hair and a thin gray beard and wizened face with sharp, brilliant brown eyes. He is in some respects decidedly warped, to the point of craziness, and said many foolish things, but he does know a great deal and admits it to be only a small fraction of potential knowledge, although he is conceited to the utmost and will tolerate no disagreement... He played the clavichord with an extraordinary variety and beauty of tone color, although marred by lapse of memory and the assertion that there is only one way to play a piece and he can prove why!" I don't know if the Arnold family saw the letter, but he was pleased enough to visit again.

I didn't know that Ralph had become blind for his last decade – it must have been a time when I wasn't reading obituaries. He was born on 10 June 1911 and died on 13 April 1984. This isn't an autobiography, but it is well worth reading. He wasn't just a Scarlatti or baroque man.

## Gothic Voices re-launch

#### CADOGAN HALL

4th March 2015

Gothic Voices will be taking part in the 2014/2015 'Choral at Cadogan' series on 4 March 2015 and are using this opportunity to perform a new programme for the first time and relaunch the group in its slightly altered form. After Leigh Nixon's retirement the group are now comprised of Catherine King mezzo, tenors Steven Harrold and Julian Podger, and baritone Stephen Charlesworth ([www.gothicvoices.co.uk](http://www.gothicvoices.co.uk)).

*Mary, Star of the Sea* combines mediæval settings of Marian texts with those by modern composers, including Arvo Pärt and Joanne Metcalf. The programme will be recorded live by the BBC.

It also includes a new piece that is being written for Gothic Voices by the English-born composer, Andrew Smith, and this will be its world premiere. Based on the 14th century mediæval text, *Stond wel Moder* is a dialogue between Mary and Christ speaking from the cross – a beautiful and inspiring poem. Andrew has lived in Norway since an early age. He has written music for many top ensembles including 'Trio Mediæval' and 'New York Polyphony'. He also sings himself and is an accomplished organist ([www.andrewsmith.no](http://www.andrewsmith.no)).

Tickets from [www.cadoganhall.com](http://www.cadoganhall.com)

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**Richard Wexler Antoine Bruhier: Life and Works of a Renaissance Papal Composer** (Centre d'études supérieures de la Renaissance.) Brepols, 2014. •555pp, 75.00. ISBN 978 2 503 55329 0

I hoped to have reviewed this already, but time was short, thanks to a busy time in January. It is an extraordinary book, as far as I can tell from dipping into it. There will be a full review next issue.

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We are delighted to announce that Prof. Peter Holman, Artistic Director of the Suffolk Villages Festival, has been awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours List for services to early music.

He has also become President of NEMA after the death of Christopher Hogwood and will be formally ratified in November 2015.

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There have been adjustments in the EEMF Committee, with Clifford Bartlett becoming President after some 30 years as Chairman.

## — ., :, ;, , or ?

## Simon Ravens

Firstly, an apology. To readers of *EMR* who blow and scrape, and indeed to singers whose interest in early music lies anywhere but the choral repertory of Tudor England, you have my sympathies. Over the last year these pages have been hijacked by a small number of us, worrying away at details of terminology and pitch which, to an outsider, must look infinitesimal and, frankly, inconsequential. The good news I can offer such readers is that I think the area of contention in our ongoing debate has been narrowed down to a single paragraph of evidence. The bad news is that before we can move on, we need to narrow down our focus to the most microscopic level of all: a single punctuation mark.

The story so far. Roger Bowers wrote of the early sixteenth century that 'contemporary documentary sources identified as available the four timbres of boy treble, falsetto alto, tenor and bass'.<sup>1</sup> (This 'falsetto alto', Roger argues, sang the mean part, which all other evidence tells us was sung by boys.) I asked what these 'sources' were.<sup>2</sup> Roger responded that he 'had in mind the Chichester Cathedral ordinance of 1526'.<sup>3</sup> So not multiple sources, then, but a single source. Or is it? Had Roger, in citing what appears to be one piece of evidence, inadvertently referred to a number of different sources? Please all bear with me in what follows, because the modern historiography of that single ordinance is, I believe, of interest to how we read any aspect of early music.

To my knowledge, the first musicologist to refer to the Chichester ordinance was Frank Llewelyn Harrison. Here is how he first presented the Latin text in *Music in medieval Britain*, back in 1958.

...quod sint quatuor clerici laici concinuas voces habentes et musica docti. quorum unus ad minus semper sit basse naturalis et audibilis vocis. aliorum vero trium voces sint suaves et canore. ita quod a commune vocom succentu possint naturaliter et libere ascendere ad quindecim vel sexdecim notas. Sherborne's Donations, Copy 2 in Chichester, Sussex County Library, fo. 18.

The thing we need to note here is the punctuation mark which appears between the words *canore* and *ita* (which I have underlined, here and subsequently, for ease of reference). It left Harrison, who Roger has described as 'the greatest expert in this field' with an obvious and unequivocal way of reading the text:

As part of his donations to Chichester Cathedral, Bishop Sherborne provided about 1530 a foundation of four lay-clerks. They were to be singers of polyphonic music, for their voices were to blend well together, and one at least should be a good natural bass, while their combined

voices should have a range of fifteen or sixteen notes.<sup>4</sup>

In essence, that punctuation mark after *canore* made it clear to Harrison that the following and final sentence – about the 'range of fifteen or sixteen notes' – is not umbilically linked to the *trium voces*, but is a summation of all that has preceded it, and thus refers to the four lay-clerks as a whole. In other words, Harrison believed that the range from the lowest bass note to the highest note sung by the Chichester men was two octaves. This is what he would have expected, since in the music of the time, two octaves is the combined range of the bass, tenor and counter-tenor parts: by implication, then, the mean part above was not sung by one of the men, and thus must have been sung by boys – in line with all other evidence. Such a two octave range could easily be taken by a group of modal-voiced singers (what we would think of as basses, baritones and tenors).

So how has the interpretation of the two-octave range in the Chichester ordinance changed over the last fifty years? After Harrison, who believed it to refer unambiguously to the compass of all the four singers, came David Wulstan in 1969.<sup>5</sup> Wulstan used Harrison's source, and followed his reading, believing that the range applied to all four men, singing the bass, tenor and counter-tenor parts. His major development of the arguments regarding Tudor performance practice, of course, was to believe in a sounding pitch a minor-third above written pitch: this carried with it the implied understanding that at Chichester and elsewhere there were effectively no deep basses, and that at least the top of the counter-tenor part (in this case one or more of the four men) was sung in falsetto. With the subsequent erosion of the high-pitch theory, Wulstan's understanding of the role played by the falsetto voice has lost its foundation. One thing which Roger and I agree on, incidentally, is that the early Tudor counter-tenor was a modal (not a falsetto) singer. By extension (and the significance of this will become clear later) we also agree that the term 'counter-tenor' has not always denoted a falsetto singer.

The first musicologist to use a different source of the ordinance was Roger, in 1986.<sup>6</sup> Here is how he presented Bishop Sherburn's (sic) ordinance then:

...quod sint ibidem perpetuo quatuor clerici laici concinuas

1 Roger Bowers, 'Chains of (rehabilitated) gold', *EMR* 159 pp. 10–17.

2 Simon Ravens, letter, *EMR* 160 p. 44.

3 Roger Bowers, 'Sounding pitch in Thomas Tallis, Mass 'Puer natus est nobis'', *EMR* 163 p. 11, n.10.

4 Frank L. Harrison, *Music in medieval Britain*. (New York, 1958), p. 181. The text had actually first been brought back to light by a Victorian Precentor at Chichester, Mackenzie Walcott, 'Early Statutes of the Cathedral Church of Chichester', (1877), p. 231: Walcott provides no translation or comment, but we might note that he too includes the punctuation mark after *canore*.

5 David Wulstan, 'Vocal Colour in English Sixteenth Century Polyphony', *Journal of the Plainsong and Medieval Music Society* 2 (1979), p. 34.

6 Roger Bowers, 'The vocal scoring, choral balance and performing pitch of Latin Church Polyphony in England, c. 1500–58', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 112 (1987), pp. 50–51.

*voces habentes et musice docti, quorum unus ad minus semper sit basse naturalis et audibilis vocis; aliorum vero trium voces sint suaves et canore, ita quod a communi vocum succentu possint naturaliter et libere ascendere ad quindecim vel sexdecim notas.* Oxford, New College, Archives of the Warden and Fellows, 9432, ff. 21v-22r.

What has happened to the punctuation mark that we saw in the Sussex source after the word *canore*? In Roger's transcription, Harrison's stop now appears as a comma, arguably making it less clear whether the two-octave range applies to all the singers or whether it excludes the bass. We will have to deal with the vagaries of medieval 'punctuation' in due course, but for the time being we can note that in 1986 Roger, whilst admitting that 'the Latin is not wholly unambiguous', claimed that the compass of 15–16 notes applied only to the *trium voces* and not to the combination of these three with the *basse naturalis*. His 1986 translation was as follows:

...that there be in perpetuity four lay clerks having mutually blending voices and learned in music, of whom one at least is always [to be possessed] of a natural and audible bass voice: while let the voices of the other three be sweet and melodious, so that by the joint application of their voices they may naturally and freely encompass 15 or 16 notes.

Then, in 1995, Roger revisited the New College version of the text.<sup>7</sup> Whilst not presenting the Latin original on this occasion, the translation he now offered had a tiny but (as we shall later see) interesting difference in punctuation: his earlier colon after 'bass voice' has now become a semi-colon.

... four lay clerks having mutually blending voices and learned in music, of whom one at least is always [to be possessed] of a natural and audible bass voice; while let the voices of the other three be sweet and melodious, so that by the joint application of their voices they may naturally and freely encompass 15 or 16 notes.

Roger's interpretation of this passage did not change at this point, other than by removing his earlier admittance that the Latin is 'not wholly unambiguous'.

Roger's 2014 treatment of Bishop Shirburn's (sic) ordinance, though, is very different. His source here is a version which exists in the British Library, and which Roger presents thus:

...quod sint ibidem perpetuo quatuor clerici laici concinnas voces habentes et musice docti, quorum unus ad minus semper sit basse naturalis et audibilis vocis, aliorum vero trium voces sint suaves et canore ita quod a communi vocum succentu possint naturaliter et libere ascendere ad quindecim vel sexdecim notas. British Library, Cotton Charter xii.60.

In a note elsewhere about this source, Roger states that the British Library version is a copy of the New College one.<sup>8</sup> If so, it would appear from his transcription to be an inexact copy since, significantly, that New College comma

after *canore* seems to have disappeared entirely.<sup>9</sup> Roger's translation is faithful to the way he presents the Latin of the British Library version:

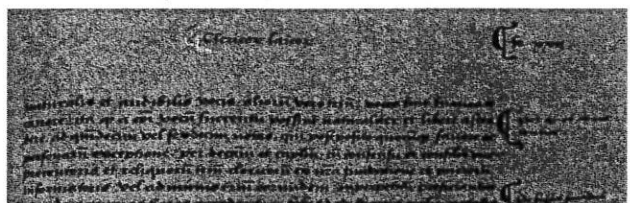
...four lay clerks possessing pleasing voices and learned in music, of whom let always at least one is always be of a bass voice natural and audible, and let the voices of the other three be sweet and sonorous so that from their voices' common accord they are able naturally and freely to rise to fifteen or sixteen notes....

Roger now comments of the original that 'the wording was so chosen' that the range applied 'solely to the three voices in the direct context of which it was made'.

So, in our texts and translations we have turned 180 degrees from the full stop Harrison presents, to Roger's early comma, to this seamless join: from Harrison and Wulstan's belief that the Chichester men sang the counter-tenor, tenor and bass parts, to Roger's earlier claim that the 'not wholly unambiguous' text probably referred also to the mean part, to Roger's current assertion that the Latin 'ruled out all chance of ambiguity' – and that the early mean in early Tudor Chichester was a 'falsetto alto'. This is quite an about-turn for a little ordinance that is stuck in time and stuck in places.

So now we come to the eureka moment when we take a closer look at the sources which Roger has dealt with. Here is the New College version, as it actually appears:<sup>10</sup>

[Fig. 1: Oxford, New College, Archives of the Warden and Fellows, 9432, ff. 21v-22r]



What is immediately obvious here, is just how much the modern presentations of this and its parallel texts are, inevitably, simplifications. Modern typography has no easy way of reproducing, for instance, the overlining which signifies abbreviations of words such as *ibidem*. And whilst modern typography has no such problem in reproducing the punctuation marks of dots and strokes, these will not necessarily have a directly transferable meaning to the modern reader. In particular, a modern editor will need to decide about how to represent the frequently occurring oblique stroke (/). This is the *virgula suspensiva*, which was used to indicate short pauses, but was sometimes interchangeable with the *punctus* (the ancestor of our modern full stop). At various times in his

7 Roger Bowers, 'To chorus from quartet: the performing resource for English church polyphony, c.1390–1559', in *English Choral Practice, 1400–1625*, ed. J. Morehen (Cambridge, 1995), p. 35.

8 Roger Bowers, 'The vocal scoring, choral balance and performing pitch of Latin Church Polyphony in England, c. 1500–58', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 112 (1987) p. 50, n.27.

9 According to the Chichester County Hall archivist Diane Ladlow, there are actually no fewer than seven extant versions of Bishop Sherbourne's donations. The precise genealogy of these is beyond the scope of both this article and this author.

10 Reproduced by permission of the Warden and Scholars of New College Oxford. For their help and expertise in dealing with this manuscript I would also like to record my thanks to the New College archivist, Jennifer Thorp, and to Dr James Willoughby and Andrew Parrott.





expositions of the ordinance, Roger interprets this punctuation mark as a colon, a semi-colon, a comma, and something even less than that.

Although the British Library source is not an exact copy of New College 9432, it does in fact contain precisely the same oblique stroke (/) after the word *canore*. As we have seen above, in his 2014 presentation of the Latin, Roger does *not* reproduce this punctuation mark. Nor, consequently, does it appear in his translation. Whereas an argument can be made to interpret the sign / as a number of different things, presenting and interpreting it as nothing seems harder to justify.

With that little oblique stroke restored to its rightful place, the text becomes 'not wholly unambiguous' again, and the sole piece of contemporary documentary evidence presented to historically justify the 'falsetto alto' in early Tudor music has crumbled." End of argument?

Is that conclusion too emphatic? Should we accept, for instance, that scholars can continue to 'use the term 'falsetto alto' loosely', as Roger suggests? I am far from convinced. The problem is that the word 'falsetto' actually means something very specific: it is not a 'timbre', interpretable by the subjective ear, but a technique – an observable laryngological phenomenon. The same applies to 'modal' – whether we like the word or not. And if we wish to describe a singer who deploys both techniques, then the expression 'dual-register' will serve us perfectly. Since these techniques are empirical phenomena – historical constants – with them we can, I

11 Although there are those – Frank Ll. Harrison, Andrew Parrott and myself to name but three – who would argue that the text is not at all ambiguous: that the punctuation mark is deliberately placed there precisely to *avoid* ambiguity.

believe, clearly describe the voice of any non-castrated adult male we ever wish to, past or present. Simple. The difficulty comes the moment we allow ourselves to use terms which, at various times in various places, have meant various things. Perhaps it as simple as thinking of it in the following way. Counter-tenor, *haute-contre* and alto are nouns.<sup>12</sup> Because they have changed their meanings through time we will, if we wish meaningfully to use them in any historical context, need to qualify them with adjectives – modal, dual-register and falsetto. At that point we will need to remember that the function of an adjective is to give more information about the object signified: to tighten meaning, not to loosen it.

Ah, semantics! I am always surprised that musicians – and early musicians above all – should need persuading of the need for using signifiers (be they words or symbols) as precisely as possible. Of course we should not fool ourselves that semiotics in music is a science of absolutes: when Beethoven writes a dot over one crotchet and a dash over another, the precise interpretation of those signs may be a matter of debate. What is not a matter of debate, however, is that he meant *something* by them – something other than a modern editor might wish to mean by leaving the signs out altogether.

12 Take the term *haute-contre*, which Roger uses to describe some of the singers in Philip's Habsburg chapel. (Roger Bowers, 'Sounding pitch in Thomas Tallis, Mass 'Puer natus est nobis'', *EMR* 163 p. 13.) For most of its history the term *haute-contre* denoted a purely modal singer, although I strongly suspect that Roger does not have this meaning in mind. (See Neal Zaslaw: 'The enigma of the *haute-contre*', *Musical Times*, 115 (1974) pp. 939–41; Mary Cyr, 'On performing 18th-century *haute-contre* roles', *Musical Times* 118 (1977) p. 292; Andrew Parrott, 'Falsetto and the French', *Basler Jahrbuch für historische Musikpraxis*, 26 (2002) pp. 129–48.)

## Resonanzen Festival – Vienna, January 17 – 25

Brian Robins

Held annually across a week in mid-January, it takes place in the Wiener Konzerthaus, the beautifully restored home of the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. Including no fewer than four halls of varying size, the venue thus allows for all the events of a festival that ranges from large-scale events to chamber concerts to take place under one roof.

In recent years, Dramaturg Peter Reichelt has brought some of the finest artists and ensembles in the early music world to Resonanzen, the spectacular results of which policy can be heard in a number of live recordings that include a marvellous Rameau *Les Indes galantes* under Hugo Reyne and, most recently, a star cast in Veracini's *Adriano in Siria*, a review of which will appear in the next issue of *EMR*. Each year the festival is given a theme, that for 2015 being 'Fürstenspiegel', which translates as 'Mirrors for Princes'. This umbrella encompassed not only ten concerts, but also a number of fringe events including films and further chamber concerts.

We were able to attend the three major concerts of the first weekend, which opened on 17 January with Vincent Dumestre's *Le Poème Harmonique* and the fine choir of Capella Cracoviensis in a programme commemorating the 300th anniversary of the death of Louis XIV in September 1715. Given to a capacity audience in the Grosser Saal, the programme ranged from the touching intimacy of three of Charpentier's *Méditations pour le Carême* to the ceremonial pomp of Lully's double-choir *Te Deum* of 1677. While it is the brilliance of the choral writing in the *Te Deum* and the rarely heard and gravely imposing *grand motet O Lacrymae fideles* that obviously make the greatest instant impact, it was the more reflective moments of the Lully pieces that stay in the mind; 'Te aeternam' was beautifully floated, while the opening of 'Patrem immensae' was delivered with noble dignity and tonal lustre by bass Benoît Arnould, the stand-out among a fine team of soloists. He was equally affecting in the Charpentier *Méditations*, *petit motets* scored for a trio of male voices and continuo, combining sensitively with haute-contre Jean-François Lombard and tenor Jeffrey Thompson to realise the latent passion of Charpentier's highly expressive madrigalisms.

The following evening brought to another packed Grosser Saal one of Baroque music's leviathans in the form of the 53-part *Missa Salisburgensis* (given with its attendant and similarly scored motet *Plaudite tympana*), once the subject of disputed authorship, but today pretty firmly attributed to Biber and dated to 1682. The ascending galleries at the rear of the stage allowed for the massed forces of Jordi Savall's Hespèrion XXI, Le Concert des Nations and La Capella Reial de Catalunya to achieve the spatial effects demanded by the five 'choirs' to at least some degree, aided greatly by the splendid acoustics of the Grosser Saal. Despite the imposing numbers, the work is in fact structurally not particularly complex, relying for its effect

on the strong contrasts of weight and colour between fully scored sections and the subtlety of the more intimate passages. As with the Lully *Te Deum*, it was the latter that have tended to stay in the mind, though 'Qui tollis' was built with overwhelming and unforgettable grandeur. Throughout, Savall's direction was indeed marked by total control attained with a minimum of fuss, his one-per-part vocal forces and instrumentalists forming a single, cohesive body devoted to realising the full potential of this remarkable work.

Our final concert on 19 January brought not only a change of venue to the smaller Mozart Saal, but also a complete change of mood. In many years of reviewing I have never hidden the fact that the recorder is not my favourite instrument, so the prospect of a whole concert featuring two recorders was never going to be anticipated with, well, special enthusiasm – especially given that the theme binding nearly twenty pieces was that annoyingly ubiquitous Baroque favourite, birdsong. That the concert did not turn out that way at all was down to two factors: the superlative playing of Dorothee Oberlinger and Hugo Reyne, and the totally engaging and witty presentation, which also drew in the continuo team from Reyne's La Simphonie du Marais to provide an irresistibly entertaining evening that ended up with encores featuring French café music! The packed audience loved every minute and so did we.

### AN EARLIER FESTIVAL

Brian wrote: Among other notable features Resonanzen must surely be the first early music festival of the year. In fact, I was at the Valletta Baroque Festival, going to concerts on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> the last of which I devoted to the editorial. This was its third years, and the concerts I attended were packed.

The first of the other two events I caught was Robert King's The King's Consort. The Festival is based at the Manoel Theatre (guide-books name it as the oldest theatre in action but the staff say "2<sup>nd</sup> oldest", dated 1734) together with a large number of extravagant and often beautiful churches from the mid-16th-century onwards. I heard the first half in the Gods, and the orchestra was marvellous, though Iestyn Davies was too remote for comfort. In the stalls after the interval, though, things changed: the band was just the same, but the singing was transformed. The programme was entirely Handel, though if the Festival reaches the next level, it shouldn't too obviously simplify the more expensive and little used instruments. The playing fitted the stage well, with a pretty period backing. The theatre was packed. Robert talks well, but one thing that sounds wrong is his withdrawal from the keyboard: he is supposed to play continuously, and the easy solution is not to slow down till the dominant, and then indicate the rallentando by the shape of what the director plays!

CB

## LONDON REVIEWS

Andrew Benson-Wilson

### CONCERT REVIEWS FOR APRIL & JUNE

Since Andrew was thinking of doing reviews off his own bat, we thought it would be sensible to him start from the beginning of the year. Meanwhile, we have two more issues. We would be interested to receive reviews from subscribers – on the whole it has worked well with the recordings. So it would be intriguing to see what we get. We may do a little touching-up for musical or literary reasons if the main content is good. Dead-line the 15<sup>th</sup> of the previous month (March and May), but starting from the beginning of the year. We look forward to the result!

#### RAMEAU 1. FRENCH RIPIENO

I was alerted to the concert by the 30-strong Esher-based Ripieno Choir by the Monteverdi String Band, who were providing the accompaniment to their 'La Chapelle Royale' concert (15 November, All Saints' Church, Weston Green). It was only a few hours before the concert that I realised that it was conducted by fellow *EMR* reviewer, David Hansell, here conducting to his strength in the French repertoire. The impressive programme notes set the scene of the music of the Sun King, only Leclair and Mondonville falling outside the 72 year reign of Louis XIV. The Rameau anniversary was the initial spark for this programme, with his powerful *Deus noster refugium* and the contrasting (and more academic) *Laboravi clamans*, the former featuring a fine soprano soloist, particularly in the tricky flourishes of the third section. This was a testing programme for any choir to sing and interpret, but the Ripieno Choir, although not entirely without the usual amateur choir issues coped well both musically and technically.

#### RAMEAU 2. DAPHNIC & ÉGLÉ = OSIRIS

Les Arts Florissants are regulars at The Barbican, and with their director William Christie, have done much to bring French music to London ears. On this occasion (18 Nov) they aimed to 'rethink Rameau for a modern world', with a notable contribution from Sophie Daneman, not in her usual singing persona but as the stage director for two little known (and unconnected) opera-ballets. *Daphnis et Églé* (a *pastorale héroïque*) and *La Naissance d'Osiris* (a *ballet allégorique*) were written for private performance at Fontainebleau, rather than Versailles, when Rameau was in his 70s. However, *Daphnis et Églé* was not performed in Rameau's lifetime, its intended first performance (as a coda to a comedy play) having been pulled after an unimpressive dress rehearsal. It includes no less than 16 dances, here interpreted by choreographer Françoise Denieau. The plot revolves around the two protagonists who start out as friends (without benefits)

but, with the help of a High Priest and Cupid, realise that they are in fact in love with each other. *La Naissance d'Osiris* has no discernable plot, apart from the high jinks that surrounded the birth of Osiris. It was written for the birth of the future Louis XVI but, despite the plot and the occasion, makes no mention of Egypt or of the birth of the baby Duke (who, along with Osiris, was to come to a sticky end). The combined plot lines stretch from unexpected love to childbirth. Sophie Daneman provided a slightly shaky link between the two, by making Daphnis and Églé parents of 'Osiris', whose birth was announced by Jupiter from the far corner of the Barbican gallery. I wasn't overly impressed with the production, although staging these two works for a modern audience rather than French aristocrats was always going to be problematical – and the costumes were sumptuous, if you like that sort of thing. However, musically it was a great success, with excellent playing from Les Arts Florissants and fine singing, particularly from Reinoud Van Mechelen as Daphnis, Élodie Fonnard as Églé and Magali Léger as Amour and Pamilie. William Christie was in his characteristic red-socked showman mode, spending much of his time conducting towards the audience, with his back to the orchestra (sited at the back corner of the stage) and with the singers' backs to him.

#### RAMEAU 3. PLATÉE

A couple of days after the Barbican's Les Arts Florissants Rameau, our own Early Opera Company gave us his *Platée* in the more intimate surroundings of St John's Smith Square (20 Nov) – the first of a series of co-operations between the EOC and SJSS. This full-length comedy opera was written for the 1745 wedding of the young Dauphin (father of Louis XVI) and the Spanish Infanta, and is based on a rather brave plot for such an occasion. *Platée* is a singularly unattractive marsh nymph who believes she has entrapped Jupiter with her beauty – the whole a plot by the gods and muses as a means of curing Juno of her jealousy at Jupiter's amorous wanderings. The bravery of the plot was further reinforced by such textural suggestions as 'marriage and love ... rarely go together', and the fact that the 19 year-old Infanta was apparently not much of a beauty herself. The role of *Platée* was a wonderful comic creation by Thomas Walker (who, like others in the cast, had created their roles for Stuttgart Opera with Les Arts Florissants, starting with him clip-clopping through the audience as a visual cross between the bearded Kenny Everett (in his 'best possible taste' persona) and the Austrian bearded drag-queen Conchita Wurst (winner of the 2014 Eurovision Song Contest). This was a clever interpretation, not least as it reinforced the comedy aspects of the piece. The other parts were played and dressed straight, with each taking on two or more roles. Emmanuelle de Negri



excelled as *La Folie* (and *L'Amour* and *Clarine*), as did Martijn Cornet as *Citheron* and *Un Satyre* – and baritone Callum Thorpe was a powerfully sonorous Jupiter. Emilie Rénard made for a dramatically jealous Junon, using the expansive colours of her voice and her acting ability to great effect. As Christian Curnyn was unwell, Paul Agnew stepped in to guest conduct. This is the first time I have seen him directing such large forces, and I was very impressive by the technical ability and musical sensitivity of his conducting.

#### KLINGZEUG'S SECRET DESTINATIONS

I first reviewed the three members of the young Austrian group *klingszeug* in the curious surroundings of an open-sided pavilion in Innsbruck's Hofgarten, so it was good to see them playing indoors (19 Nov). The title of their programme, 'Secret Destinations', could have applied to the London venue, the intimate setting of the Austrian Cultural Forum, hidden away in the backstreets near the Albert Hall. But in practice, it referred to the Europe-wide range of pieces, from one of the first violin sonatas, by Cima (1610), to a lute concerto by the Austrian Johann Georg Weichenberger (c1700). This was almost inaudible in Innsbruck, but here the delicacy of David Bergmüller's playing was evident. The highlight of the evening was the musically sensitive violin playing of Claudia Norz, notably in Pandolfi's *Sonata la Biancuccia* (a musical reflection of a singer in the Innsbruck court) which also demonstrated the virtuosity of her technique.

#### HILLIARD ENSEMBLE – OVER & OUT

Few readers will have failed to notice that the Hilliard Ensemble is bowing out after an astonishing 40 year reign as monarchs of the mostly male vocal scene. Amongst their more obvious and high profile series of swan-song events was a concert at Douai Abbey with Sarah Tenant-Flowers' choir *Singscape* (22 November). I thought this was an appropriate farewell concert to go to as it highlighted the Hilliard's long association with other choirs and musicians, as well as the wide range of their musical horizon, all set in the spectacular acoustics of the packed Abbey. *Singscape*'s contribution included pieces by Byrd, Parsons, MacMillan and Dove, with the Hilliards offering Pérotin, Plummer, Cornysh, Pärt and anonymous early English, Orthodox and Armenian pieces. They combined for the final piece, the extraordinary, and apposite, 'Hand over Hand' specially composed by Orlando Gough for one of the Hilliard's recent *Voices Now* events and reflecting the importance of handing over to the next generation. This was a moment of real virtuosity from *Singscape*, the Hilliards and conductor, Sarah Tenant-Flowers, all being on excellent form. As is usual in Douai Abbey concerts, the last piece comes after the final applause and a prayer, with the intention of leaving the Abbey in its silent state, the audience being asked not to applaud, but to leave in silence. In this case, this coda was the Tallis Canon.

#### A GRAND TOUR?

No strangers to innovative programming, the Academy of Ancient Music's Milton Court concert 'The Grand Tour: Vienna and Paris' (25 Nov) found them somewhat overstretched. The concert was broadcast live on Radio 3, so many of you will have formed your own opinion. They opened with Mozart's masterly, but not terribly sexy *Adagio* and *Fugue* in C minor, here given a rather workaday reading by the reduced AAM strings. The most interesting work was Mozart's *Concerto* in C for flute and harp, with Rachel Brown and Masumi Nagasawa giving delicate and fluid performances of a work than only occasionally reveals Mozart's genius. But it was tonally fascinating. According to the AAM publicity and the rather gushing programme notes, the highlight should have been Gluck's 1761 ballet, *Don Juan ou Le Festin de Pierre*. The programme notes made much of the history of the first performance, but failed to give this audience much clue as to what was going on in the succession of 15 short snippets. This was a missed opportunity. It should really have been performed with dancers but, failing that, at least have a narrator to tell us what is happening in each piece. Some dances might have been relatively obvious, although the programme note's reference to a "siciliano ... emphasising the flat supertonic" might be a bit obscure for many in the audience. Even on its first performance, the audience were given a synopsis of the action, as well as actually seeing the dancers – so why not here? The conductor was the young Hungarian Gergely Madaras, recipient of a recent ENO fellowship. It was a shame he wasn't given a more inspiring programme for what I think was his AAM debut – ditto the players who, perhaps understandably, didn't seem that involved in the proceedings. [The *Adagio* and *Fugue* could sound powerful, but not sexy, and Gluck's *Don Juan* is one of the few pieces by him that I like, if you can wait for it! This could have been a fine concert: were the problems really the players or the reviewer? CB]

#### CHELYS IN OXFORD

Chelys are a four-strong viol consort that met as London students. Their concert in Oxford's Holywell Music Room (26 Nov) focussed on the music of Purcell, with eight of his *Fantasias* contrasted with pieces by Jenkins, Locke and Simpson. It helped the intimacy of the occasion that they sat at floor level in front of the staging, with the audience grouped in a horseshoe around them. They included a harpsichord (played by Dan Tidhar) for *Suites* by Locke and Purcell and a couple of solo spots. I am rarely convinced by the combination of harpsichord and viol consort, and would have much preferred to have heard an organ. The Purcell *Fantasias* were particularly well performed by Chelys, one feature being the fact that the treble viol never dominated, as is so often the case with viol consorts. [but viols usually are less dominating than violins!] These are extraordinary pieces, and Chelys managed to bring out the intense harmonies without overly luxuriating. It was nice to have an attentive group of youngsters in the audience – I gather they were school pupils of one of the players.

## EX CATHEDRA IN LONDON

Ex Cathedra are one of the UK's leading choirs and ensembles. Over the past 45 years they have put Birmingham onto the early music map through their performances and extensive educational work. But sadly, they don't make that many trips to London. So it was good to hear that their professional Ex Cathedra Consort was coming to Milton Court (30 Nov) to present 'An Elizabethan Christmas', together with the viol consort Fretwork. This was a very well performed and staged concert, the first half switching between the choir on the left and Fretwork on the right, the lights highlighting each in turn. The first half was devoted to Byrd, with movements from the Mass for Four Verses interspersed between smaller scale pieces for viol consort or solo song, starting with 'Lullaby' with Matthew Venner as the excellent soloist. They combined, visually and musically, in the centre for the second half and music by Sheppard, Orlando Gibbons, Tallis and Byrd. I liked the way that Ex Cathedra's inspirational director, Jeffrey Skidmore, acknowledged each singer individually at the end, with each giving a bow. It was no surprise to me that, since this concert, Jeffrey Skidmore has been awarded the CBE (the highest British honour below a knighthood) in the Queen's New Year Honours List for services to choral music. Very well deserved.

## MUSIC AT ST MICHAEL'S

The arrival of an established early music specialist as organist of St Michael's Battersea has seen the start of an enterprising regular Sunday evening concert series under the banner 'Music at St Michael's'. Pawel Siwczak is clearly not afraid to use his musical contacts – the concert that I attended (on 7 Dec) included the likes of Michael Chance, Kati Debretzeni, Catherine Mackintosh and Annette Isserlis together with slightly less established figures such as Kate Aldridge and Kinga Gáborjáni. It was Kinga Gáborjáni who put this programme together, under the not entirely explained title of 'Tears and Beyond', with music by Buxtehude and JC, JS and CPE Bach. The tears reference came in Johann Christoph Bach's exquisite *Ach, dass ich Wassers g'nug hatte*, with its musical evocation of fountains of tears. The other vocal works were either concerned with praise or sin, the former including the opening Buxtehude *Jubilate Domino*, with its tricky high-ranging viola da gamba part, the latter with the concluding JS Bach Cantata *Widerstehe doch der Sünde* [in E flat or F?] A comedy moment came with CPE Bach's Trio Sonata *Sanguineus und Melancholicus* with Kati Debretzeni and Catherine Mackintosh donning masks to represent the various moods. This is an enterprising series which, at least on this occasion, bought in far more people than would normally have attended a Sunday 6.30 evening service.

## NEW LAMPS FOR OLD

Chapelle du Roi gave another of their annual 'New Lamps for Old' programmes at St John's Smith Square (6 Dec), contrasting chant and pieces by John Sheppard, Thomas

Tallis, Tomas Luis de Victoria and six contemporary English composers (David Braid, Samuel Bordoli, Robert Hugill, Norman Harper, Jonathan Darbourne and Cecilia McDowall), writing to the same texts. Four of the modern works were commissioned by Chapelle du Roi for this programme and were world premieres. Amongst these pairings of ancient and modern, we also heard John Sheppard's sumptuous *Cantate Mass*, possibly composed for a Christmas Vigil, the distinctive head motif helping to link the various sections together, despite being separated in performance. Sheppard's respond for Christmas Day Matins, *Verbum Caro Factum Est*, was also included, paired with a new piece on the same text by Norman Harper, both ending with the high soprano line. Tallis's paired *alternatim* settings of the *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* opened the concert, with Victoria's *Alma Redemptoris* and Cecilia McDowall's take on the same text forming the conclusion. The eight singers made a generally attractive sound, with the middle voices by far the most effective, the upper and lower voices having excessive vibrato for my taste, and this repertoire. The acoustics of St John's Smith Square is better suited to music of the Baroque era than Renaissance, so can be a testing venue for choirs.

## SPITALFIELDS MUSIC'S WINTER FESTIVAL

In their Winter and Summer festivals, Spitalfield's Music have traditionally concentrated on contemporary and early music, as well as a wide range of other, often eclectic, musical genres together with their exemplary (and 25 year-old) Learning and Participation programme.

### England's Orpheus

Countertenor Iestyn Davies is fast becoming England's Orpheus (he was born in York, before anybody queries this statement), but the programme that he and Elizabeth Kenny (playing two theorbos and a lute) put together was based on three earlier possible bearers of that honorary title, Dowland, Purcell and Handel. Iestyn Davies is an example of the ability of the audience at the London Handel Festival Singing Competition to spot future stars, gaining the Audience Prize in 2004. Sitting on what I recognised as an organists' bench surrounded by candles and with a mug of something steaming, Iestyn Davies gave a stunning example of sheer musicality, his sensitive and expressive voice proving itself in the varied repertoire. His voice is not devoid of vibrato, but it is controllable and carefully applied. There were several highlights, one being the exquisite *soto voce* ending of 'In darkness let me dwell'. Elizabeth Kenny's solo contributions included Dowland's 'King of Denmark's Galliard', featuring some colourful ornaments. After an evening of such divine music, the choice of encore was an interesting one, not least for watching the faces of the audience as the words slowly sank in.

### Siglo De Oro

The vocal group, Siglo de Oro, were formed by a group of London students in 2008, and specialise in unusual and neglected repertoire and, like Spitalfields Music, cover both early and contemporary music. It is directed by

Patrick Allies. Their attractive programme (St Leonard's, Shoreditch, 9 Dec) spanned the whole Christmas season, and was arranged in four thematic sections; The Rose, The Mother, The Mystery and The Light. The second section produced the most wide-ranging of their varied repertoire, with music ranging from Hildegard via Parsons (his *Ave Maria*, with its expansive Amen) to Giles Swayne. After the interval, 'The Mystery' opened with the only piece from their historic namesake period, Morales' *Pastores dicite*, with its refrain of *Noel*. The 14 singers, in various groupings, produced a reasonably homogenous sound, with particularly good sopranos and altos, although the historic range of their programme was a little too wide for my tastes.

#### Nine Daies Wonder

The following evening (St Leonard's, Shoreditch, 10 Dec) gave me my first opportunity to see a programme that has been touring the UK for several months, 'Nine Daies Wonder', with 'dances, songs and instrumental music from the Elizabethan court, towns and countryside', created and performed by Claire Salaman & Steve Player and The Society of Strange and Ancient Instruments (10 Dec. St Leonard's Shoreditch). The tale is based on the antics of the flamboyant actor Will Kemp(e), from Shakespeare's own company, as recorded in his 1600 *Nine Daies Wonder* pamphlet. After a dispute with his fellow actors, Kemp Morris danced his way to Norwich from London, taking about 27 days in total, but dancing for nine of them, and entertaining (to varying extents) a range of people on the way. The programme depicted each of the nine days (and the juicier aspects of his non-dancing days), with spoken text from Kemp's journal, dance from Steven Player (as Will Kemp) together with songs and instrumental music. There were a few liberties taken with authenticity, one being the inclusion of Claire Salaman's nyckelharpa, but the whole made for an entertaining evening. As well as some wonderfully energetic dancing, Steven Player also turned out to be by far the best singer, Jeremy Avis's awkwardly strained voice not being up to the task. [The CD has been around much of 2014.]

#### Le Concert Spirituel

A 10-strong contingent of Le Concert Spirituel players, directed with splendid restraint by Alice Piérot, their leader of the past ten years, gave a concert of contrasting music dating from around 1700 (Christ Church Spitalfields, 12 Dec). The very range of their programme raised a number of issues (including pitch, temperament, choice of instruments etc), but none of those factors distracted attention from a very fine concert. They started with Muffat's *Suite Sperantis Gaudia* (*Florilegium Primum* No 2), emphasising the French aspects of the work. A Purcell *In Nomine* and the *Fantasia Upon One Note* explored a completely different genre which, despite the use of violins rather than viols, worked well. A musical leap to Central Europe followed, with Biber's *Sonata II* from *Fidicinium Sacro-Profanum* and Zelenka's *Hypocondrie à 7 Concertanti*, the players visually and musically emphasising the mood expressed by the latter's title. Charpentier's processional *Symphonies pour un reposoir* (dating from the 1670s), explored another genre, the

inclusion of their double bass being one possible anomaly, although in practice it only strayed into the 16' zone briefly in the *Amen*. They managed to make the first *Tantum Ergo* sound remarkably like a Lutheran chorale. Corelli's *Fatto per la Notte di Natale* was their nod towards the season before they ended with Brandenburg 3. An oddity here was the replacement of the Phrygian cadence that Bach provides between the two movements with an extended theorbo solo from Etienne Galletier – musically curious, but a good chance for the previously reticent Etienne to come to the fore. Another player that caught my attention was Fanny Pacoud, firstly for her managing to swap repeatedly between violin and viola, but mostly for the lovely little dances she featured as part of her playing. Like the other players, she really seemed to be enjoying herself, something that an audience really does notice. For those who want to know about such things, they were nearly all playing with all-gut strings, reflecting the fact that the metal-wound gut strings were rather slow in catching on after their introduction around 1700. Incidentally, it was interesting to follow a Facebook discussion about aspects of the concert that stemmed from a photo that somebody had posted – modern times!

#### Orgelbüchlein at the Tower's Chapel Royal

Of the various Chapels Royal currently in existence, the one based at the little chapel of St Peter ad Vincula within the Tower of London has to be the most historic. It contains the remains of three Queens (Anne Boleyn, Catherine Howard and Lady Jane Grey), a couple of Catholic Saints, and the headless cadavers of several others who fell out with royalty. The 13 December concert was another in the series of Orgelbüchlein events, a project that encourages modern composers to complete the 118 chorales that Bach didn't get round to composing in his little Orgelbüchlein set of organ chorale preludes. As is usual with these concerts, the new compositions were inserted between Bach's own preludes, the whole enclosed with a major Bach work. The organist was the curator of the project, William Whitehead, with the Chapel's Director of Music leading his own choir, the 6-strong Odyssean Ensemble, in pieces by Byrd, White (Lamentations) and Tallis, all reflecting the Holy Week theme of the chosen organ chorales. Solo voices from the choir sang the chorale melodies before the preludes, with Zoë Brown having a particularly effective voice.

#### ST JOHN'S SMITH SQUARE CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL

##### Chaos

The annual St John's Smith Square Christmas Festival has adopted a number of performers who seem to return each year, one being the European Union Baroque Orchestra (11 Dec). As readers may know, EUBO have had a troubled year as their usual EU funding stream ground to a halt – hopefully temporarily. Despite having had to cancel the 2014 cohort of auditioned players, they have continued to keep up some elements of their touring concert schedule, drawing on players from earlier incarnations of the training orchestra. Their SJSS programme was *Le Création du Monde*, starting, perhaps appropriately given their current situation, with Rebel's



depiction of chaos at the opening of *Les Eléments*. The second half Suite of pieces from three Rameau operas had a similar start with the *Ouverture* from *Zaïs* (a more hesitant depiction of chaos), closing with the tempest from *Platée*, with the filling between focussed on various wind-inspired pieces from *Les Boréades*. The other works were Muffat's *Propitia Sydera* Concerto Grosso (with its fine *Ciaccona*) and Rebel's *Les Caractères de la Danse*. As ever, the young players demonstrated characteristic grace and eloquence along with musical excellence, with notable contributions from flautists Emma Halnan and Flavia Hirte, violinists Yotam Gaton and Jamiang Santi and cellist Guillermo Turna Serrano.

### A French Christmas

Oxford Baroque (directed by Jeremy Summerly) returned for their third visit to the SJSS Christmas Festival with their programme 'A French Christmas – *In Nativitatem Domini Canticum*' (15 Dec), with the focus on the music of Charpentier and the entertaining genre of French organ Noël variations. I gather that there had been several performances of the *Messe de Minuit* during the London season, all following Charpentier's specific instructions to have the organ play after the Kyrie sections (*Icy l'orgue joue le même Noël*). So I was surprised that this performance ignored that aspect of the score – particularly disappointing given that the Christmas organ repertoire was such an important part of the evening's programme. Instead, organist Christopher Wilson (playing the large concert organ at the liturgical west end) opened and closed the evening (and added interludes) with Noël variations by Daquin, Dandrieu and Lebègue, only the last being of the same generation as Charpentier. However excellently played they were (on an organ that needs very careful registration to sound French), it was a shame that there wasn't a more authentic approach to the programme – Daquin was 10 when Charpentier died, and speaks with a very different musical language. The Offertoire (*Laissez paître vos bestes*) should have been played by the strings, not the organ – this was even mentioned in the programme notes! Vocally, the highlight was Charpentier's motet *In nativitatem Domini canticum*, a delightful evocation of the story of the shepherds. The choir explored the more delicate aspects of the music, to the extent that they sounded hesitant at times, notably at the start of the Gloria. On a purely practical note, it was a shame that the choir waited until after the opening organ solo before coming on to the stage – an unnecessary hiatus in the proceedings. The instrumentalists caught the lilting style perfectly, although I wasn't convinced by the use of the theorbo as a percussive rather than chordal instrument in the *Agnus* and the *Choeur des Anges*.

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### VALLETTA INTERNATIONAL BAROQUE FESTIVAL

The St John Passion (page 1) was the most moving event of the three I visited. The second concert I went to was the only one with Maltese input (Jan 16<sup>th</sup>), the Valletta International Baroque Ensemble (VIBE). The concert was at St Paul's Anglican Pro Cathedral, easily recognized by its English steeple. It was financed by Queen Adelaide, widow of William IV, who convalesced in Malta in 1838-39 and is rather more stolid than the Catholic churches. The concert opened with a trio sonata, op. 1 no. 6, by Michel' Ang Vella (1710-92), a Maltese priest, whose 1768 Parisian publication was for three flutes, though here it was presented for the usual pair of violins and continuo. Mhairi Lawson is a singer I've enjoyed for years as a Scottish lass and a Sussex mother. Her singing of *Armida abbandonata*, one of Handel's best-known Cantatas (though even now less well known than it ought to be), was impressive, and the opening recitative without bass is a surprise for first-time hearing. (If you want to try it, the score and parts are available from me cheaply.) Unusually, parts were copied by JS and CPE Bach.

Agostino Steffani (1654-1728) was an Italian from the Veneto, who spent most of his life in what we now call Germany, acting as musician and diplomat. *Occhi per che piangete* is for two voices (soprano and mezzo – Gillian Zammit & Clare Ghigo) and continuo. Handel's trio sonata op. 2 no. 6 in G minor is one of his best, with eight bars without continuo introducing the second movement. The final piece, which was most impressive, was the *Stabat Mater* by Girolamo Abos (1715-60). The Festival had been featuring his works to celebrate his tercentenary. He was born in Malta and wrote operas for Rome, Naples and London. The work has a lot in common with, for instance, Pergolesi and others, but Abos combined verses to make it less repetitive, and that makes the *Stabat Mater* feel more cohesive. I was very impressed. There are editions now available and a facsimile of the manuscript via Petrucci/IMSLP. The church was completely booked out!

The Festival seems to be a great success. There were 21 concerts in 15 days, more concentrated at the week-ends. We hired a car and drove round Malta and Gozo. There were lots of sights to see and the large churches in small villages that we tried to see were always shut. January is probably not the best month to visit, since a lot of attractions were closed and at times the weather distinctly cool – thanks to the southerly wind!

The concerts had a fair number of tourists attending. The St John Passion seemed to have a large local attendance, with no apparent fear of Anglicans or Lutherans! 2016 is already fixed and is listed on this year's programme. CB

## CD REVIEWS

## MEDIÆVAL

*Aquilonis* Trio Mediæval: Anna Maria Friman, Linn Andrea Fuglseth, Berit Opheim  
ECM New Series 481 1160

Medieval isn't entirely appropriate, and I wondered whether to put it with other miscellaneous anthologies at the end. But the three ladies (Berit Opheim is new) make it feel like the world moving reluctantly from the 12<sup>th</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup>. Not everyone wants too much of the repertoire, but in the right condition it is impressive and I'm pleased to hear this, though I failed to take the time to try it earlier. It is good to see support from John Potter (for the booklet note as well as recording supervision), and I was delighted that Selene Mills translated some of the texts and she received a dedication to The Office of St. Thoriak. Well worth buying.

CB

*Machaut The Dart of Love* The Orlando Consort 64' 59"  
Hyperion CDA 68008

It seems that no matter how much Machaut one sings and listens to him, he is still a poet and composer who can surprise and delight. This selection of ballades, virelais, rondeaux and motets largely though not exclusively on the theme of love is a good case in point. Approaching it with a reasonable knowledge of Machaut's output, I was particularly engaged by the two-part narrative ballades, elegantly sung by members of the Orlando Consort, as well as Matthew Venner's mesmerising solo virelai *Ay mi, dame de valour*. The editions for all the items on this varied and interesting disc are taken from the forthcoming Complete Works ed. Plumley and Stone, and Anne Stone provides an informative and thoughtful programme note. Even in the hands of singers as capable as the Orlando Consort, this music never sounds less than tricky and esoteric, and it is disarming to see Anne Stone express the same surprise that I have always felt that Machaut's work should have survived so well into ensuing generations whose music inhabited an entirely new sound world. Perhaps Machaut's A-list connections and the lavish editions his music appeared in as a result of them had some part in their high

and enduring profile. The performances here are of a generally very high standard, idiomatic and involving, and if there are one or two moments where passing harmonies don't quite gel, this is perhaps the almost inevitable result of the demands Machaut places on the voices. This is a CD which clearly takes the decision that Machaut's music is the territory of voices alone, and having taken it, the singers make a very powerful and beautifully blended case for it. D. James Ross

*Antonio Zacara da Teramo Currentes: spinatoo intorno alcor* Kristin Mulders S, Kjetil Almenning T, Hans Lub fiddle, David Catalunya clavicembalum, Jostein Gundersen recs & artistic dir.

Lawo Classics LWC 1026

The booklet uses the name Antonio and avoids Zacara except to explain the name: he was born with a form of phocomelia, with a stunted growth which led to his name Zacara, "a small thing of little value or "a splash of mud". He lost some fingers, but seems to have had the skill to act as a scribe. He was born around 1365 at Teramo and had links with the popes by the 1390s. He died probably in 1416. His music is based on voice and accompaniment, hence the two singers in the cast. Personally, I find voices more moving than instruments – the singers are brilliant – but a third part for instrument fits the layout. I enjoyed this very much. I couldn't find the score, but the music is clear – though just by ear one cannot guess how much was embellishment. The colour of the text and translations needs good light. CB

15<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

*Argentum et Aurum: Musical Treasures from the Early Habsburg Renaissance* Ensemble Leones, Marc Lewon 78' 37"  
Naxos 8.573346

The Ensemble Leones works with Prof Birgit Lodes at the University of Vienna, continuing a long Viennese tradition of research into and performance of early music. This window into the musical world of the 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century Habsburg empire embraces delightful and lively accounts of music by a host of familiar masters such as Heinrich Isaac, Neidhart von Reuentel, Oswald von Wolkenstein, Paul Hofhaimer and the monk of Salzburg

as well as more obscure composers and much anonymous material. The singing by two solo voices is spirited and forthright and the accompaniments on a range of period stringed instruments, a Renaissance flute and a splendid cameo on a cow horn are sympathetic and atmospheric. It is encouraging to hear a CD devoted to music which has rarely been performed before (11 items are world premieres), resurrected from archives and realized by a team of committed and expert specialists, and more encouraging still to find the end result entertaining and informative. D. James Ross

16<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

*Antico Animoso mio desire* 16<sup>th</sup>-Century Italian Keyboard Favourites Glen Wilson hpscd 60' 07"  
Naxos 8.572983

Glen Wilson continues his exploration for Naxos of little-known keyboard repertory with this recording of the complete *frottola* arrangements commissioned and printed by Andrea Antico in 1517, his *Frottole intabulate da sonare organi, libro primo*, the earliest printed keyboard book. Wilson has added some short dances from the Venetian Biblioteca Marciana Ms. IV, 1227 compiled around 1520. All the pieces are short, some extremely so, but there are a few more-extended pieces by Bartolomeo Tromboncino which provide more meat. The *frottola* was a formulaic popular genre, consisting of melody with simple chordal accompaniment. Without the words the basic harmonisations can become monotonous and it would be preferable to hear at least of some of them in conjunction with vocal performances. Wilson has devoted much research to the printed collection which he says was poorly printed and is defective in many respects. He has corrected and convincingly restored the pieces with reference to the vocal originals. His playing is intelligent and straightforward, letting the music speak for itself. He uses two instruments: a harpsichord for the Antico pieces and iron-strung spinet for the Marciana dances. Both are modern copies of unspecified 16<sup>th</sup>-century models by Donatella Santoliquido. It is certainly good to have the whole of this print now recorded and, through Naxos licensing agreements with many educational institutions, it will be widely accessible.

Noel O'Regan

**A. Gabrieli *Messa bassa a San Marco*** I Cantori di San Marco, Marco Gemmani dir  
Tactus TC 530701 (70' 23")  
*Missa Vexilla Regis* + motets a 6 e 7 voci

Singing one voice to a part, I Cantori di San Marco present a selection of six- and seven-part motets by Andrea Gabrieli from *Concerti di Andrea et di Gio Gabrieli* (Venice 1587) as well as the six-part *Missa Vexilla Regis* from the *Primus Liber Missarum* (Venice 1572). On the down side, in spite of the title there is no attempt to order the music into any sort of liturgical reconstruction, with the fourteen motets making up the first half of the programme and the polyphonic mass movements, shorn even of their incipits, in a block making up the second half. Nor in spite of the group's name are they recorded in St Mark's itself. There are no texts or translations and the promised 'scores' provided on a website evaded my determined searching. However, having got all that out of the way, these are, notwithstanding a couple of moments of sagging intonation, generally expressive and musical performances of works which remain bafflingly underperformed. Andrea Gabrieli is a competent rather than a spectacularly inspired master, and the blocking of his music on the CD emphasized his relatively restricted compositional armory, but the motets are never less than spectacular and deserve to be more widely known. The CD states that this is a 'world premiere recording': at first I was sceptical, but a quick internet scan suggests most if not all of the motets and indeed the mass are receiving their first recorded performances – a remarkable and deplorable state of affairs!

D. James Ross

**Lassus *Musica Reservata: Secret Music for Albrecht V*** Profeti della Quinta, dolce risonanza 66' 31"  
Pan Classics PC 10323

This fascinating project brings to life the famous Hans Mielich painting of Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria's court musicians directed by Orlandus Lassus. Drawing together the many scholarly analyses of this picture, Bernhard Rainer and Florian Wieninger identify the instruments and through clever deduction work out how they may have been employed in conjunction with the singers. The resulting performances of three of Lassus's Penitential Psalms are superbly convincing. Arguing that the complete forces were reserved for the final six-part setting of the doxology of each psalm allows the performers to round off each

of these epic works with a truly spectacular climax, while a consistently high density of vocal and instrumental ornamentation ensures that interest is maintained throughout the rest of these sometimes very extended psalm settings. The six excellent singers, three falsettists, two tenors and a bass, are beautifully complemented by the instrumental consort, including a racket, a bass violin, two cornamuses and a flute as well as some more frequently encountered instruments. The performances are highly expressive and utterly convincing musically. Interspersed are equally fine instrumental performances of the eight-part sacred motet *Dic mihi quem portas* and the ten-part secular motet in praise of Duke Albrecht himself, *Quo properas, facunde*. Sadly, the programme notes say nothing about these latter two works, and as they are performed instrumentally we miss the splendid textual conclusion to the latter, which in many ways sums up this splendid CD and the great musical patron who inspired it – 'Dux et chori Albertus vivat nulli virtute secundus, Bavariae et nostri Gloria Duxque chori.'

D. James Ross

**Tallis *The Cardinal's Music*** Tallis Edition  
Andrew Carwood dir. 73' 50"  
Hyperion CDA68076

I've been surveying the Tallis/Byrd 1575 publication (see p. 3), but I have a closer affinity for Tallis and enjoyed the variety of the 19 tracks (though perhaps less the four-part mass). Tallis was too early to anticipate the equivalent of Byrd's domestic but often religious songs, frequently with solo voices, viols and/or lutes. Similarly, Tallis's keyboard music was shoprt, except for two similar pieces, while Byrd emerged later as a great keyboard composer. It was the Lamentations that got me into Tallis some 60 years ago. The opening is *O salutaris hostia*, the close *Miserere nostri*, whose authorship is argued, without conclusion, whether the final piece of 1575 volume was by Tallis, Byrd or both. The singers (two each of S. mS. A. T. Bar, & 3 bass) never miss their highest standard, with excellent relationships between lines. As an anthology, this is ideal.

CB

**French Psalms of Catholics & Huguenots**  
Sagittarius, Michel Laplénie  
Et cetera KTC 1509

Music by Caignet, du Caurroy, Châtillon de la Tour, de Courbes, de l'Estocart, Goudimel, Lejeune, Mareschal & Planson

This interesting programme juxtaposes

French psalm settings from the late 16th century from both sides of the religious divide. The big names such as Lejeune, Goudimel, l'Estocart and du Carroy are all represented along with many less familiar names representing the full range and musical wealth of this repertoire. However, for reasons which remain unexplained in the booklet notes, they are given to my ear such deeply unidiomatic, highly affected swoopy operatic renditions that I found myself struggling to appreciate the music through the performances. The decision to perform most of them using unaccompanied voices, apart from the occasional contribution from an organ is also baffling when we know that various combinations of voices and instruments were routinely used for this material. The occasional psalms where unison voices were accompanied by the other parts on the organ were more successful and provided a little variety, but I'm afraid my attention soon wandered and with each carelessly swooped entry my annoyance grew until I really stopped enjoying these accounts. I am not sure that if I hadn't been reviewing I would have listened to the whole CD through, but as I had to, I can report that the performance shortcomings persisted and the affectations began to include portamento, vibrato and silly surging. Disappointing and annoying – a missed opportunity.

D. James Ross

#### Instrumental Music around 1600

**Dowland *Lachrimae or Seaven Teares***  
Hathor Consort, Romina Lischka 67' 57"  
Fuga Libera FUG718

Viol players have approached the Dowland publication of 1604 in a variety of ways and I have reviewed several of these: Fretwork's recording, dated 1989, *Night's Black Bird*, which intersperses the pavans with pieces by William Byrd. The English Fantasy Consort recording of 2001, *Images of Melancholy*, accompanied the pavans with some of Holborne's from his collection published in 1599 for the same instrumentation, together with readings from the *Corpus Hermiticum* and improvised organ interludes from Andrew Wilson Dixon. More recently Jordi Savall reissued his 1987 recording of the complete publication, with the galliards, transposed so that their keys corresponded, paired with the pavans. All of these recordings are very successful, in that they are compelling performances of marvellous music.

This recording takes the publication on its own terms and presents the pavans as a



cohesive unit, needing neither modification nor interpolations. The impetus for this approach is attributed to Anthony Rooley. I was present at a workshop he presented in York in 1989, with the Rose Consort, in which he put forward the idea that the pavans formed a unified musical thought, which should be presented as a unit, a sustained development, a contemplative form describing spiritual progress. At the time, I found this completely convincing, and this recording is the first that I have encountered which acknowledges this concept. The idea is briefly summarised in the booklet notes, whose writer feels these ideas are 'completely alien to us today.' I couldn't agree less with that comment, they resonate fully with those who empathise with contemplatives, and perhaps explain the current attraction of Gregorian chant.

The music thus performed does indeed present the listener a challenge: 35 minutes of a single theme, even in tempo and texture. It's a courageous approach, which needs to be very well played, as indeed it is on this recording. There is no spurious seeking after variety, and the playing has a compelling direct and honest musicality, unfailingly mellifluous, legato, with exquisitely subtle inflection. Listening to them in this way heightens the significance of the melodic and harmonic variety, and the introduction of the B flat in *Lachrimae Verae* has real impact.

Then come the lighter dances, and a marked change in articulation and mood. Balance throughout is transparent, the sound a delight, and the listening experience undeniably powerful. Congratulations.

Robert Oliver

**Pavana:** Music by Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck & Peter Philips Kathryn Cok hpscd <TT> sfz music SFZMor124 – LC-18271

Philips Fantasia, Galliard Pagget, Pavan, Pavan Pagget, Passamezzo Galliard, Passamezzo, Pavan Sweelinck Engelse Fortuin, Est-ce Mars, Mein junges Leben hat ein Eind, More Palatino, Onder een linde groen, Pavana Lachrymae, Pavana Philipp

This is a satisfying programme which alternates the music of Sweelinck and Philips and points up the undoubted musical relationship between the two. It is also good to be able to compare them directly with Sweelinck coming across as more extrovert and Philips more cerebral from this selection which includes variation sets, pavans and galliards. Cok's very solid technique inspires confidence and she chooses a comfortable tempo for each piece which works all the way

through, with a judicious use of rubato. This allows the listener to follow easily the development of the basic material through successive variations. The same is true of her playing of the pavans and galliards: she keeps the thread of the material going in a way that is clear to the listener but without ever sounding mechanical. Cok plays on a copy by Titus Crijnen of a Ruckers 1638 instrument which is very well recorded, bringing out its 'virginal-like' sound. Overall this is a fine recording.

Noel O'Regan

**Sweete Musicke of Sundrie Kindes:** English consort music from the 16th and 17th centuries The Royal Wind Music, Paul Leenhouts Lindoro NL-3023 58' 50"

Music by Brade, Bull, Byrd, Coprario, Dowland, Harding, Holborne, Mallorie, Parsons, Tallis, Turges, Weelkes & Woodcock

The Royal Wind Music, brain child of Paul Leenhouts of the Amsterdam Loeki Stardust Quartet, returns with another stunning disc. With its trademark laser tuning and quartz accuracy it creates a sound of enormous solidity. 13 players compressed into five-part music, doubling with organ-stop precision in unisons and octaves, creates a new sound world for recorders. The changes are ringed by the inclusion of pieces using just three or four players, and by selecting instruments of different registers down from 9" pitch to below 8' (reaching a genuine bassoon Bb). The doubling of this bass, often twice at the octave (even then using contrabasses) recreates a string-like harmonic set, which suits the bass-line centred (and indeed string-based) pieces of the early 17th century English repertoire: Byrd, Dowland and Holborne. One or two of the smaller scale pieces allow themselves a minute wilting of the airflow and its sub-micro effect on pitch which is extremely expressive placed against such pitch and tone solidity. Occasionally a vibrato appears on longer individual notes, which, though very small, is aurally magnified against this background solidity and seems to have no expressive purpose – the note already has sufficient weight lent by its context. If I dare make another criticism of such super-human playing, I'm surprised by the over-frequent use of chippy staccatos as the entire basis for some of the pieces. Loeki Stardust, on an early recording, made a very witty rendition of "The Temporiser" in this style, but once is enough. True, all the little interstitial notes pop up individually in the holes in an amusing way, but induce

a mental version of the fairground game "splat the rat". In particular, when applied to melody-centred pieces such as Parson's *A Song Called Trumpetts*, Byrd's *Browning* and Woodcock's *Hackney*, we lose the roll and swing of the melody which is the binding force in those pieces. However, in the two anonymous final pieces, *Maypole* and *Anti-Masque*, the staccato effect is used but this time the full spectrum of note lengths is exploited, as opposed to just one or other end. This is to very good effect, creating that magic mix of melody and dance which so characterises the English muse. The repertoire is well chosen and it is good to hear such attention being paid to it. Amongst so much wonderful rich consort music from around the turn of the 16th into the 17th century, I enjoyed the refreshment provided by an Edmund Turges piece from the earlier Ritson manuscript; the three parts meandering around each other in that particular way. I'd love to hear more.

Stephen Cassidy

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

**M. Galilei Lute music by the younger brother of Galileo Galilei and their father Vincenzo** Anthony Bailes lute 65' 55"

Ramée RAM 1306

MG Sonatas in c, C, f, G, a & B flat, Toccatas in d & F VG Alcan non può saper, Calliope, Fantasia Terza, Polymnia & Urania

They were quite a family. Vincenzo Galilei (c. 1520-1591) was a lutenist, composer, music theorist, and as a member of Count Bardi's Camerata, contributed to the development of the *stilo recitativo*. One of his sons was Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), the famous astronomer whose telescope graces the cover of the present CD. Another of his sons was Michelangelo Galilei (1575-1631), a lutenist who spent much of his life in Poland and Lithuania, and his later years in Munich, where his *Primo Libro* was published in 1620. The music in this collection comprises 12 Sonate for ten-course lute: the first ten are in different keys, and consist of a Toccata followed by Correnti, Volte, and sometimes Gagliarde; the last two are Passamezzo/Saltarello pairs. In his introduction Galilei advises the reader that any dissonance is deliberate, and the music has been carefully checked before publication. He also says that the first time through the Correnti and Volte should be played "*schietta*" – translated by Douglas Alton Smith (in his introduction to the Tree facsimile edition) as "in a straight-forward manner" – presumably so that the repeats

in style *brisé* are not upstaged.

Anthony Bailes plays the Sonate in Fm, B flat, Cm, C, G, Am, and the Toccata from the Sonate in Dm and F. The Sonata in F minor gets off to a slow start with a Toccata. The first ten bars are played with considerable rhythmic freedom, after which the rhythm becomes more settled. There are interesting shifts of harmony, and Bailes adds an extra note (h3) to the final chord. The following Corrente is played at a realistically unhurried pace (roughly crotchet = 120); for the dominant chord at cadences, Bailes adds a stark appoggiatura, but no trill before the two notated semiquavers anticipating the final chord; the steady stream of *style brisé* quavers tracks the melody and bass, but with a constantly changing finger pattern (similar to bluegrass banjo), so that the bass notes played with the right-hand thumb may occur at any of six quaver places within the bar. In his liner notes Bailes points out that *style brisé* is very much an aspect of French lute music, and he makes the interesting suggestion that Galilei may perhaps have been influenced by the French lutenist, René Mesangeau. There follows a lively Volta; for the repeat of the first 16 bars, Bailes sparingly adds a few notes of his own, without straying from the idea of "*schietta*", before embarking on a cascade of *style brisé* quavers. To lengthen the suite, Bailes tacks on a Passamezzo and Saltarello in F minor from the end of the book. Particularly striking is the long Toccata in D minor, which is in three sections and lasts over seven minutes. His playing is masterful, with close attention to details of articulation, although I don't think he should slow down for semiquavers.

For a change of style, Bailes plays five pieces by Vincenzo Galilei, including three Gagliarde – Calliope, Polymnia and Urania – from his massive manuscript (available in facsimile from SPES), entitled *Libro d'intavolatura di liuto*. Stewart McCoy

**Lambert Aires** Charles Daniels T, Fred Jacobs *French theorbo* 62' 13"  
Metronome MET CD 1092

This recital format – songs interspersed with short instrumental pieces – has much to recommend it both on disc and in recital. And when it is done with this level of artistry the listener's pleasure is unalloyed. Lambert is a sort-of French Dowland and Purcell all-in-one, a composer of almost 300 songs and in his time regarded as an 'admirably beautiful' singer to his own accompaniment. Charles

Daniels's distinctive tone and Kirkbyesque engagement with the texts is given admirable support by Fred Jacobs, who also contributes deft performances of the instrumental preludes. Booklet essay and song texts/translations are in French and English. This is most strongly recommended for concentrated listening with the words in one hand and a suitably charged glass in the other. David Hansell

**Melani Marienvesper** Solisten der Rheinischen Kantorei, Das Kleine Konzert, Hermann Max 65' 53"  
cpo 777 936-2

Although the bulk of this CD is devoted to music by Alessandro Melani (1639–1703), two pieces of the programme are supplied by Giuseppe Ottavio Pitoni (1657–1743) – *Deus in adjutorium* and *Ave maris stella*. The psalm settings (where is *Lauda Jerusalem?*) are for single or double choir with basso continuo; Max opts for harp, two other pluckers, violone, dulcian, harpischord and organ – varying according to who is singing, which helps differentiate between solos (of which there are a lot!) and tutti. His decision to sometimes double vocal lines (with strings and two recorders) also enriches the soundscape. When the writer of the notes says a work is for four soloists and two four-part choirs, the performance actually features two four-part choirs from which four singers take the solos; there are, however, works that pitch a soprano against the full choir in a concerto-like structure. The culmination of the recital (a live recording from the 2012 Rheingau festival) is Melani's fine 10-part setting of the Litany of Loreto; it is impossible to deny that there are signs of fatigue in the soprano voices – after more than an hour's singing, it is hardly surprising. Perhaps the instrumentalists could have been used to provide some of the fillers, rather than expect the singers to sing motets between the psalms as well. Overall, though, lots of glorious singing to enjoy and music that is otherwise unavailable. BC

**Pachelbel Festal Sacred Music** Johann Rosenmüller Ensemble, Arno Paduch 67' 58"  
Christophorus CHR 77385 (© 2003)  
*Christ lag in Todesbanden, Der Herr ist König, Gott sei uns gnädig, Lobet den Herrn*, suite (theorbo)

This re-release is most welcome back into the catalogue if only as a reminder of the very rich treasures that await discovery by other musicians, should they be brave enough to venture off the trodden path. It

shows that Pachelbel was anything but a "one trick pony" and, despite the canon's everlasting popularity (not to mention its many hidden subtleties and complexities!), a composer with an almost boundless imagination, without whom I fear many better known composers of a generation later could never have written the music they did write! BC

**contentement passe richesse: music for viol and theorbo from the Goëss Tablatures, 1650-1680** The Little Consort (Johann Valencia *lyra viol*, Hermann Platzer *theorbo*, Richard Carter *bass viol*) 76' 40"  
fra bernardo fb1403111

Music by Hotman, Jenkins, Lully, Le Moyne, de Saint-Luc, Simpson & Stöeffken [alias Steffkin]

The title of this recording is taken from the manuscripts themselves, a collection made over several generations by an Austrian family, who had migrated there from the Low Countries. It selects music from them, in particular by Dietrich Stöeffken and Nicolas Hotman, but also includes music by the Englishmen, Jenkins and Simpson, as their music also features in the collection. Other pieces include arrangements of dances by Lully for theorbo and an Allemande by Estienne Le Moyne.

These MSS are an important source for any student of 17th-century music for viol. Hotman and Stöeffken are well-known names to those who read about this period of the development of viol music. Stöeffken's music is in some English MSS, and he was a friend of Jenkins, and Hotman is regularly cited as the teacher of Ste Colombe. More relevant to the listening public, the MSS are a treasure store of beautiful, and mostly unheard music.

It is beautifully presented here. The programme opens and closes with all three playing divisions, and in between, the theorbo and *lyra viol* alternate with solo pieces. It makes for compelling listening, an enjoyable programme despite or because of the similarity in styles of the two instruments, the one plucked, the other bowed. This makes for an illuminating comparison, underscoring the close relationship of the *lyra viol* and the lute, giving a fascinating insight into the way in which musical ideas are expressed through the very different media of bow and finger.

I've written favourably about Johanna Valencia's playing in the past. She plays with great understanding and exciting virtuosity, fabulously expressive. I had not come across the theorbist before, but he is a marvellous player, expressive and thoughtful. Highly recommended. Robert Oliver

## LATE BAROQUE

**Bach *Weihnachtsoratorium*** [Sunhae Im, Petra Noskaiová, Stephan Scherpe, Jan Van der Crabben SATB], La Petite Bande, Sigiswald Kuijken 139' 22" (2 CDs)  
Challenge Classics CC72394

Kuijken's *Weihnachtsoratorium* is a treat: it's clear as a bell, with every note of every line audible, and the tuning very precise. As you would expect from La Petite Bande, it's all one-to-a-part, except for doubling the upper strings, so the balance of voices, strings, wind and brass is as it is, and the liner notes say that this balance hasn't been messed around with by the recording engineers! No finger-holes in the trumpets, so ringing D major chords and some lovely 6ths, and Sara Kuijken, the second violin, doubles elegantly as the echo soprano in *Flößt, mein Heiland* in IV.4.

The voices are a pretty good blend: Kuijken often uses Van der Crabben, and while the clarity of his real bass voice provides an excellent foundation for the singers, he can also offer a lyrical quality in arias like *Erleucht* with the oboe d'amore in V.5 or the duet with the soprano in III.6. Petra Noskaiová, the alto, is another of Kuijken's frequent singers, and is very good too – she has all the clarity you need for the chorus work, and a robust and distinctive sound for the solo material: listen to her line in the Terzetto in V.9, where she offers a very distinctive counter-balance to the S/T duet. The tenor, Stephan Scherpe, is a real find, singing the choruses with control and restraint, the *Evangelista* with effortless clarity and his arias – especially *Frohe Hirten* – with precision and panache. About the soprano I feel less sure. The voice quality is always more problematic as you go higher in the vocal range, and although she is fine when not under pressure (as in *Flößt, mein Heiland* in IV.4), Sunhae Im does not match the superlative boy, Leopold Lampelsdorfer, who recorded I-III with Holger Eichhorn and the Musicalische Compagnie in 2012 (which I reviewed in *EMR* 153) in the ensemble work. (Eichhorn never did IV to VI with Lampelsdorfer.) There is something about sopranos singing OVPP which needs exploring: it is more audible, and so more distracting, if you press on a note tied over a barline, which can add an unhelpful and occasionally panicky-sounding edge, rather than floating these held notes as a viol-player would; and then there is the question of whether the almost unconscious soloist's vibrato –

especially in concerted passages – confuses the choral texture. How can singers learn to judge the different style that is needed for an aria and then in the chorus of four voices? Having said this, the ensemble is excellent in the largely homophonic passage like *Wo ist der neugeborne König* (V.3)

Tempi are judicious – perhaps a bonus from not having a driven conductor in charge? – and I imagine the layout is similar to the Petite Bande performances you can see on YouTube, where the singers stand together in front of the organ in the middle, and the players ring them on a raised box – strings on the left-hand side and the substantial bass violin next to the organ (there isn't any 16' of course – and I don't miss it) with the brass and wind to the right. With Kuijken leading and directing the ensemble from the wing of the instruments, there are only occasional moments when I feel the lack of an independent conductor, but the players are attentive to each other, and know where to make the minute adjustments for the singers that give this performance its caressing chamber-music quality without sacrificing its dance-like energy.

I like this performance, and am very happy to live with it long-term.

David Stancliffe

**Bach / Vivaldi *Magnificat & Concerti***  
Pierre Hantaï *hpsc*, La Capella Reial de Catalunya, Le Concert des Nations, Jordi Savall 72' 50" (CD) 70' 20" (DVD)  
Alta Vox AVSA9909D  
BWV243, 1052; RV578 (CD only), 610

These live recordings date from 2003 (RV578) and 2013. The choral music works well in the performance spaces, though I still find it odd that HIPsters use men to sing solo alto parts in Vivaldi. Nor do I truly understand why, even with a mere 3321 strings, a solo harpsichord concerto needs a conductor. I occasionally felt a little queasy during that work, too, as the visuals did not seem always to match the sound. This is all sounding very negative and I certainly do not mean it to – of course, with performers of this calibre (the singers include Johanette Zomer and Stephan MacLeod, and the two excellent violin soloists are Manfredo Kraemer and Riccardo Minasi!) the performances were always going to be impressive. All fans of Savall will want the set. BC

**Bach *Suites Anglaises* N° 2 & 6, *Concerto Italien*** Pierre Hantaï *hpsc* 74'  
Mirare MIR251  
BWV690, 691, 706, 728, 807, 811, 944 & 971

Hantaï has put together a stimulating Bach programme which combines two *English Suites* and the *Italian Concerto*, with four chorale preludes sandwiched between them. All are clearly intended to throw light on each other: the concerto-like preludes of the two suites are put into context by the *Italian Concerto* while the chorale preludes can be compared with the slow movements of the suites and that of the concerto. The chorale preludes are more usually performed on organ but Hantaï makes a persuasive case for them on harpsichord here. He provides energetic performances with lots of forward drive, staying just on the right side of rushing. He displays excellent rhythmic control in the gígues and other fast movements, including an exciting performance of the last movement of the *Italian Concerto*. There are some effectively-ornamented repeats, particularly in the Sarabandes. Hantaï plays on a copy of a 1702 Mietke by William Dowd and Bruce Kennedy which has a particularly bright sound with a bell-like quality in the upper register which is put to good use on this recording. Registrals contrast is used well, particularly in the concerto. All in all, a very satisfying recording Noel O'Regan

**Bach *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier*** John Butt *hpsc* 213' (4 CDs)  
Linn CKD463

I should start by saying that John Butt's performance of the first Prelude of Book I is just as I envisage it, since this seems to have been a sticking point for a number of reviews that have so far appeared. For me the flexibility of tempo shown in this prelude and elsewhere is just what this music needs and foregrounds the improvisatory quality of many of these preludes, relating them to the Italian toccata or French prelude traditions. Butt knows his Bach, and the music that Bach would have known, and is able to bring the appropriate stylistic nuance to each piece, adding ornaments in a convincing way. These are fast performances, too much so in some cases, I would say; the preludes can be made to seem a bit inconsequential at times. There are places where the speeding up, in itself convincing, is not compensated for by subsequent relaxation of the tempo. But the overall effect is exhilarating and Butt's formidable technique means that one is made very aware of the keyboard virtuosity for which Bach was known, just as much as for the compositional complexity of the fugues. Once one gets used to the fast tempi, the



logic of the interpretations comes through clearly. Butt plays on Bruce Kennedy's copy of a Mietke of 1719, owned by the Dunedin Consort. It provides a good variety of registrations though not the brightest of sounds. The recording is, as one would expect from Linn, expertly done and closely miked. Butt plays the versions thought by scholars to have been Bach's final thoughts. In the liner notes he writes quite a bit about tempo relationships between Prelude and Fugue, though doesn't reach any particularly strong conclusions. One case where the tempo does change during the piece is the C sharp major Prelude from Book II. Here Butt does a logical move from crotchet in duple time to dotted quaver in triple, though it does take a bit of time to settle down. This recording will not suit everyone and one would probably want another, more standard, version in one's possessions as well but, as the overarching vision of these two great collections from a player immersed in the music of Bach, it can be highly recommended. *Noel O'Regan*  
*I doubt if anyone will agree with every prelude and fugue every time – rather than play all four discs, I've had the first one running through my computer several times, and the variety of impact changed each time I heard them. Well worth having, but not as your only version.* CB

**Bach The Well-Tempered Clavier Book II**  
 Luc Beauséjour 147' 47"  
 Naxos 8.570564-65

In many ways this recording is the polar opposite of that by John Butt (see above). If Butt can sometimes be too fast, Beauséjour can be too slow. The two CDs here take a full 25 minutes longer than the equivalent in the Butt set; this doesn't take account of possible longer gaps between tracks but it is still strongly indicative of the difference in approach to tempo by the two players. The performances here are standard and safe with very little interpretative intervention. The playing is often rather mechanical, without any agogic accent or French swing. The latter is especially odd since all three instruments used on this recording are based on French models: Beauséjour plays on copies by Yves Beaupré of harpsichords by Hemsch, Blanchet and Vaudry. They provide a particularly good variety of sound and registration, though we are not told which instrument is used for which items. There are some good performances of individual preludes and fugues here and the recording will be useful for study

purposes, but it is a pity that it doesn't convey a bit more energy and enthusiasm.

*Noel O'Regan*

**Bach The Six Cello Suites** Viola de Hoog  
 VIVAT107 (135' 25", 2 CDs)

This is a fine account of Bach's cello suites. For those who like to know such things, they are not recorded in numerical order (CD1: 1, 4, and 5 erroneously listed as being in D minor); CD2: 3, 2, 6). As well as listening to the CD, I have watched a video of Viola de Hoog playing extracts from the suites (subscribe to VivatMusic-Live on youtube.com to keep up to date with new releases). In the video, she attributes much of the excitement of the recording to the instruments she uses – a 1750 Guadagnini she has on loan and a 5-string full sized cello that her violin-maker of choice drew to her attention. It was interesting that the video confirmed what I had been aware of aurally – a lot of the beauty of her sound comes from very deliberate placing of the bow on the string and the most elegantly fluid right wrist imaginable; in slower music, this means she can point the important notes in chords, or create a dramatic, over-arching phrase, and as the tempo picks up, her bow dances across the strings effortlessly, giving due weight to the critical notes without ever neglecting those around them with magical effect. As always with Vivat recordings, production values are very high; the recorded sound is pristine, while the booklet and casing are very stylishly done. Recommended. BC

**Brescianello Tisbe** Nina Bernsteiner, Flavio Ferri-Benedetti, Julius Pfeifer, Matteo Bellotto SATB, Il Gusto Barocco – Stuttgarter Barockorchester, Jörg Halubek  
 cpo 777 806-2 (136' 19" – 2 CDs)

An opera not performed in its own day by a composer not listed in *New Grove Opera*. That's the fascinating proposition posed by *La Tisbe* of Giuseppe Antonio Brescianello, who was born in Bologna about 1690. A highly talented violinist, he was brought to Munich by the Elector of Bavaria before being appointed music director and then, probably in 1721 (sources vary), chief Kapellmeister at the Württemberg court in Stuttgart. In 1718 Brescianello presented the ruling duke, Eberhard Ludwig with the score of the pastoral opera *Tisbe*. Requiring only modest staging with a cast of just four, the composer obviously hoped to overcome the duke's reluctance to spend money on

opera. In this he was unsuccessful, the opera remaining unperformed until it was given in Stuttgart in 2012, the source of the present live recording.

Not the least of the reasons the opera failed to reach the stage may well be a quite dreadful libretto that has almost no dramatic quality and is in places barely intelligible. It recounts the familiar Ovid story of Piramus and Tisbe, immortalized for English-speakers by Shakespeare's parody in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but here with a denouement that provides the tragedy with a happy ending. Despite an over-reliance on triple-time arias, much of the music is of considerable quality, being nicely divided between lighter numbers for the two semi-comedy characters Licori (Ferri-Benedetti) and Alceste (Bellotto) and the tragic proponents, for whom Brescianello provided several truly expressive arias. With the exception of the rather grainy Bellotto, the singing is good, although neither Bernsteiner nor alto Ferri-Benedetti (is Locori, a shepherdess, really a male alto role?) come anywhere near observing Tosi's injunction that higher notes should be 'lightly touched', rather than shrieked. Much the best singing comes from Pfeifer, whose mellifluous tenor and gracious, stylish Piramo is a pleasure throughout. Which is more, I fear, than can be said of the direction of Halubek, who draws from his excellent Il Gusto Barocco playing that is at times unpleasantly aggressive, while the continuo contribution is marred the by-now wearisome mix of Baroque (in the old pejorative sense of the word) over-elaboration and strenuous attempts to redefine the lute (two of them) as a percussion instrument. Notwithstanding such caveats, the set is worth the attention of opera enthusiasts. *Brian Robins*

**Garth Accompanied Keyboard Sonatas, Op. 2 & Op. 4** The Avison Ensemble, Gary Cooper 97' 22" (2 CDs)  
 Divine Art dda 25115

Compared to his Newcastle contemporary, Charles Avison, John Garth's music is much less well-known. Although they were close acquaintances (Garth worked in Durham), Garth's two sets of accompanied keyboard sonatas are more pre-classical in style than Avison's more formal baroque concertos. The two sets of Garth are written for keyboard with two violins and cello – an excellent team of Gary Cooper, Pavlo Beznosiuk, Caroline Balding and Richard Tunnidiffe – and are recorded on a two CD set.

Cooper alternates the collections of these two-movement sonatas with a dazzling performance on harpsichord and forte-piano, with one from each set on organ. All the sonatas are worthy of recording, though some of the Op. 4 set of 1772, published four years after the earlier set, contain more mature writing with more varied forms and textures. Particularly noteworthy from the second set are Sonatas 2 and 5. The programme notes are informative, though I would have welcomed details of the keyboard instruments used by Gary Cooper. This follows on from Garth's set of six cello concertos recorded earlier by Tunncliffe with the Avison Ensemble, also on the Divine Art label. This is a most enjoyable set for lovers of English music, and one I can thoroughly recommend. Ian Graham-Jones

**Graun *Der Tod Jesu*** Monika Mauch, Georg Poplutz, Andreas Burkhart STBar, Arcis-Vocalisten München, Barockorchester L'Arpa Festante, Thomas Gropper  
Oehms Classics OC 1809 97' 14" (2 CDs)

*Der Tod Jesu* is one of those pieces that capture a moment in time and become an institution in their own right; from its initial performances in Berlin (Agricola, featured as a composer in the Classical section, directed Graun's work and sung tenor solo), it was an almost annual event in the Berlin social calendar until well into the 19th century. Thereafter it fell into neglect and has only recently found favour – and not only amongst specialists; it was even performed by the Dundee University Chamber Choir and Bach Consort last year. Although some of the solo parts are challenging in the extreme (Graun did have the court opera singers at his disposal), the five choruses are closer to Handel than to Bach, and the chorales are straightforward. I think Graun would have enjoyed the performances of the soloists here; I associate Monika Mauch more with 17th-century repertoire (her recordings of Pohle's motets are still regular visitors to my CD player!) but she is equally at home in this more demanding material; Poplutz and Burkhart are both new to me, but I look forward to hearing more. L'Arpa festante play with typical finesse. The choir seems a little too large to me; there is a certain lack of attack and focus, and the occasional fussy cadence did not impress much. The booklet has no translation of the libretto. BC

**Greene *Overtures*** Baroque Band, Garry Clarke 63' 05"

Cedille CDR 90000 152

Six Overtures in Seven Parts + Pieces in c, a in g, Overture to *Phoebe*, Overture to *St Cecilia*

A delightful disc! Maurice Greene (1696-1755) is probably best known today for his sacred music; as far as I am aware this is the first time that any of his orchestral output has been recorded. These overtures were first published in harpsichord arrangements in 1745, and reissued orchestrally in 1750. They seem quintessentially English – like Boyce, a little old-fashioned for their date, but elegant, tuneful and beautifully crafted. Try the first in D major – it sets off like an up-to-date Italianate sinfonia, but within a few bars turns fugal; an elegant *Galant* andante, with flute doubling, follows and it ends with a vigorous minuet. The others are all in versions of the standard French form – sharply dotted openings, followed by fugues and then a selection of dances – but this bald musical description does not at all do justice to Greene's particular muse. No 4, for example, has some exquisite solo flute writing in the opening *Con Spirito*, a fine double fugue, a poised, serious *Moderato* and ends with a lively *Allegro* jig. The grandest is probably the Overture to the *St Cecilia Ode*, perhaps because it was written for performance in Cambridge the day before Greene was appointed Doctor and Professor of Music at the University.

Chicago-based Baroque Band, under the expert and scholarly direction of Garry Clarke, play with the requisite blend of vigour and delicacy; the woodwind solos are particularly gracious. The disc is filled up with a selection of movements from Greene's *Collection of Lessons for the Harpsichord*, ably performed by David Schrader.

One hopes that further exploration of Greene's oeuvre, particularly some of the orchestrally accompanied anthems and odes, may follow. Alastair Harper

*Why are the Six Overtures so rare? CB has them in facsimile for £35.00*

**Geminiani/Handel *Bewitched*** Robin Johannsen, Les Passions de l'ame Orchester für alte Musik Bern, Meret Lüthi 60' 08"

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi 88843040882

**Geminiani** La follia after Corelli op.5/12, The Enchanted Forrest Handel *Armida abbandonata*

'Bewitched', the second disc by this ensemble, centres round the music of Geminiani for the staged pantomime *The Enchanted Forrest* which was performed in

Paris in 1754. The music is essentially a series of *concerto grosso*-like movements, many of which are more in the French than the Italian style. Their disparate nature would lend itself more to a staged, rather than a concert, performance. A dramatic interpretation of Geminiani's *concerto grosso* arrangement of Corelli's violin sonata Op. 5 no. 12 opens the disc. The highlight is undoubtedly Handel's early secular cantata *Armida abbandonata*, of which the soprano Robin Johannsen gives a splendidly intense yet stylish performance. Ian Graham-Jones

**Handel *Faramondo*** Emily Fons *Faramondo*, Anna Devin *Clotilde*, Anna Starushkevych *Rosimonda*, Njål Sparbo *Gustavo*, Maarten Engeltjes *Adolfo*, Christopher Lowrey *Gernando*, Edward Grint *Teobaldo*, Iryna Dziashko *Childerio*, FestspielOrchester Göttingen, Laurence Cummings 176' Accent ACC 26402 (3 CDs)

*Faramondo* marked Handel's return to London after ill health forced him into a period of exile at Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen today). By this time (Autumn 1737), the health of the various opera companies in London was failing at a pace similar to that of Handel's own (temporary) decline. Farinelli and Senesino, the star castrati, had both left London for good and John Gay's *Beggar's Opera* had rather fatally wounded the public perception of Italian Opera and Italian Opera singers.

Handel's return from Aix-la-Chapelle, however, coincided with the first Licensing Act (1737), which temporarily restricted the rise of the ballad opera, leaving an opening for the return of Italian Opera. Perhaps through a sense of vulnerability, Handel joined forces with a former partner and rival, John Jacob Heidegger (who was in an equally precarious position as producer of Italian Opera) to stage *Faramondo* and *Serse*. In the setting by Apostolo Zeno (1668-1750), *Faramondo* is a rather more serious tale than some of Handel's other operas. Lacking sorcerers and other magical elements, the plot is as confusing as most of Handel's other opera plots, but the characters themselves are relatively uncomplicated, and simply divided into villains and heroes (or heroines).

As usual, Handel composed the opera in something of a hurry, beginning on the 5 November (eight weeks before the opera's premiere), with a break from 4 December to 17 December when he was commissioned to write Queen Caroline's funeral anthem (HWV 264, *The Ways of*

*Zion do Mourn*). The premiere took place on 3 January 1738. Though of average length in terms of minutes of music, the plot of *Faramondo* is quite lengthy, but Handel moves through the libretto very efficiently, with recitatives kept short. The music (containing several borrowings from Francesco Gasparini's 1720 setting) is not the most memorable, but the dramatic pacing is such that it can be a hugely enjoyable entertainment.

I have had the pleasure of listening to a few of the recordings of Handel operas from the Internationale Händel Festspiele Göttingen, and always find them to be of the highest standard of musicianship from all sides. Laurence Cummings's many years as Director of the London Handel Orchestra and the London Handel Festival are testament to his appreciation of Handel's music and this shows not only in his own interpretation of the music, but also in his ability to communicate clearly to other instrumentalists and singers his ideas and understanding of what Handel intends at any single point in the opera. Cummings's pacing, a vital component in the success or otherwise of any opera, is as convincing in *Faramondo* as it always appears to be, and though there is the occasional moment of slight disagreement between instruments in the orchestra, this is a live recording (from 2 June 2104) and such moments are so fleeting that they must be put down to momentary technical lapses rather than any difference of opinion or lack of understanding as to the intended message at that point.

If this all seems rather picky and fussy, then it is merely a positive reflection of the incredibly detailed approach that appears to have gone in to this production. As always with the Internationale Händel Festspiele Göttingen, I have scanned the photos of the production avidly and rather wished that I could see the full production (dvd next year maybe?) From the photos, it would appear to have been a 'contemporary' or 'modern' production, and this tends to divide opinion, but the bonus here is that, of course, you don't get to see it to judge it!

Judging therefore must be purely on quality of sound and, as I have already mentioned, interpretation and orchestral playing score highly. I could go through the opera and single out arias or recitatives where each of the singers excels or doesn't. But unless one singer stands out spectacularly in either direction, that is a tedious exercise for reviewer and reader, and in this case all of the singers are of such a high standard and so pleasing in

their renditions, that all must be praised evenly. Some of the names I am familiar with from previous recordings or concert appearances, others less so. Whoever has the task of choosing singers for these productions does their job very well, though, for I have rarely taken issue with any of them, and this recording is no different.

Definitely one for the collection, and I don't think it will age either – the musicianship will stand the test of time and fashion.

Violet Greene

#### **Handel *Israel in Egypt* (three-act version)**

Julia Doyle, Maria Valdmaa, David Allsopp, James Gilchrist, Roderick Williams, Peter Harvey SSATBB, Nederlands Kammerkoor, Le Concert Lorrain, Roy Goodman (2 CDs) Et'Cetera KTC 1517

This was a kind present from Roy Goodman, whom I rarely have contact with now. He proudly mentioned that he had performed over the years the version that I prepared for Andrew Parrot (before typesetting!) and later my edition for Carus Verlag. Both editions allow for the first part being *The Funeral Anthem for Queen Caroline*, with a few verbal adjustments to act as the first act to *Israel in Egypt*. It was not particularly successful, but by Victorian times it almost equalled *Messiah*, but without Act I. The three act version is now performed occasionally, but the *Funeral Anthem* is an excellent half-concert work. There's a non-link with *Faramondo* (see above), since Handel interrupted the opera to compose *The Funeral Anthem* for 17 December 1737; *Faramondo* was premiered on 3 January 1738.

The recording (three acts in two CDs – I'm not going to tot up their length from the individual tracks). This is a work where the chorus is more than usually significant, and a bit expensive with two duets (SS and BB). The performance is never less than reliable and mostly excellent. It sensibly lacks the overdoing that some conductors prefer. Don't buy an *Israel in Egypt* without *The Lamentation of the Israelite for the Death of Joseph* (ie *The Funeral Anthem*). CB

**Handel *Rodelinda*** (DVD of performance at Theater an der Wien, 20 March 2011) Belvedere 10144 DVD

Two of our Handel reviewers have rejected this. I haven't had a chance to see it yet, and I suspect, judging from the pictures in the DVD box, it doesn't look interesting. The problem with modern sets is that singers are expected to act

continually, whereas the convention of the baroque was completely different – at least, for serious operas. If you want to modernise the opera, get someone to update the text and get a current composer to compose the score. If I find that it works, I'll reply in the next issue.

CB

**Handel *My Favourite Instrument*: Concertos, Sonatas & Arias with Oboe Xenia Löffler** [Marie Friederike Schöder S], Batzdorfer Hofkapelle 75' 22" Accent ACC24295

*"I used to write like the d.... in those days, but chiefly for the hautbois, which was my favourite instrument"*

There is certainly some infernally difficult writing here, both for the oboe, but also for the soprano; the young Handel was merciless in his musical demands before his Italian mellowing. The music is glorious, however. The two arias from *Almira* are absolutely jaw-dropping, not only for their fearsomely difficult vocal writing but particularly also for their tremendous dramatic force – right from the first few notes we are left in no doubt about the eponymous heroine's distraught emotional state! Marie Friederike Schöder negotiates her vocal tightrope with enviable aplomb, and even supplies some appropriate *Da Capo* ornamentation; she is ably partnered by the faultlessly breath-controlled oboe of Xenia Löffler. It is instructive to compare these arias with Medea's "Moriro, ma Vendicata," from *Teseo*, written some ten years later in London – the dramatic force is undimmed, but the vocal (and oboe) fireworks now seem indissolubly part and parcel of the superb overall melodic lines.

There is a similar sense of musical style developing, between the rather loosely constructed early G minor oboe concerto which opens the disc, and the fully mature, tightly knit overture to *Teseo*, given here in its Dresden version, which ends it – the close musical argument of the latter particularly grips one's attention throughout.

Batzdorfer Hofkapelle are to be very warmly commended for this fine picture of the young Handel!

Alastair Harper

**Heinichen *Unpublished Dresden Sonatas*** Ensemble Sans Souci, Giuseppe Nalin Stradivarius STR15001 (<TT>) Trios in c, F, G, B flat (2); ob sonata in g, bsn sonata in D

I was excited to see the release note for this CD – as a long time admirer of the



music of Johann David Heinichen (think Handel, minus the drama, but with a dash of Vivaldi), I find it astonishing that so many of his chamber works have remained unrecorded. In the event, though, hearing these performances has been something of a disappointment; the music is lyrical and attractive, but there are too many rough edges for me to award them a rave review – the booklet notes quite rightly draw attention to the stellar line-up of the Dresden orchestra, whose members these sonatas were surely written for, such imbalance between the oboes and the occasional stumble through semiquaver runs would surely not have impressed August the Strong. The continuo line-up of plucker, cello/gamba, double bass and harpsichord is not constant across the seven four-movement works; some lighter movements with just archlute were more successful than the full "band". There is one major failing in the programming, which is the "Sonata in Re maggiore per fagotto e b. c.", which is nothing of the sort; in fact, Max Sobel published the work as such and with a reconstructed violin part in 2004, but (having attempted my own reconstruction in the meantime) I discovered that the parts had been mixed up, and that there was a complete set, including not a violin but a flute and an *obbligato* cello part... So it is technically a *quattro* (though labelled *Concerto* in the source); I was puzzled that the booklet describes a sonata for two oboes, concertato bassoon and continuo as a trio. To sum up, this is a useful addition to the catalogue, not least for establishing premiere recordings, but hopefully the music will encourage oboists around the world to take up the challenge. BC

**Leclair Sonatas for 2 violins op. 12** Florian Deuter, Mónica Waisman (Harmonie Universelle) 79' 48"  
Accent ACC 24298

I remember one of my earliest exposures to the magical sound of just two baroque violins was a recording of Leclair's op. 12 sonatas by John Holloway and Chiara Banchini. Rather than being a replacement for that set, this new version complements it very well; the recorded sound is much clearer and the perfectly matched players of Harmonie Universelle share the earlier pairings self-evident love of Leclair's oh-so-clever writing for such a limited medium; like keyboard music shorn of its bass. The lines criss cross all the time, as soloist becomes accompanist, and by some means the G below middle C suddenly

sounds much lower than it actually is. The music is not all playfulness and light-hearted fun either; Leclair is the master of pathos, too, and Waisman and Deuter draw some quite dark sounds from their instruments. All in all, this is definitely one of my discs of the month. BC

**Marais Suites for Oboe** Christopher Palameta *ob*, Eric Tinkerhess *gamba*, Romain Falik *theorbo*, Lisa Goode Crawford *hpscd*  
Audax Records ADX13702 58' 38"  
Suites in G (2nd book), d and e (2nd & 4th books), C, g and B flat (3rd book)

I have already read several hyper-positive reviews of this release and, if it seems that I'm jumping on the bandwagon, well sorry, but what else am I to do? The music is gorgeous, the performances are super suave and the recorded sound is crystal clear. The idea of playing Marais on the oboe should not surprise anyone, since the composer himself suggested it, and it is actually surprising how well the music transfers from one register to another; I did slightly struggle with a couple of passages where the oboe part momentarily dropped down to double the bass, but then I thought about the many examples of similar passages in violin sonatas and realised that, actually, it was no big deal. Four of the six suites are from single books of Marais' viol music, while the other two combine movements from Books 2 and 4. This should be compulsory listening for all students of baroque oboe and general French performance practice. Yet another excellent release from Audax, I can heartily recommend this recording without reservation. BC

**Marcello Douze sonates** Jacques Vandeville *ob*, Jean-Michel Louchart *org* 78' 07"  
Syrius SYR141466

I have fond memories of playing these pieces during my last year at school, when I hurriedly learned recorder so that I did not have to sit my end of year practical exam on violin. They are full of charming melodies, and though sometimes challenging in the fingerwork department, they are so cleverly written that they make one sound musical with minimum effort. The present performances are on modern oboe and a full-blown church organ; the latter opens up all sorts of options for continuo realisation, and Louchart is not shy in his choice of stops. Vandeville is an award-winning oboist who has appeared as a soloist with many leading orchestras, and this is not his first venture into

Baroque music. I cannot imagine that he has listened to many period instrument performances, though; ornamentation is rigid and the stark contrast between his staccato playing and the legato of his accompanist is unsettling. Rubato is a problem, too – it was at its worst at the close of the second movement of Sonata 7, where I completely lost track of any beat. The tuning at the opening of the following Largo was also not the best. I think I prefer a more HIP approach to these pieces, no matter which instruments are involved. BC

**Rameau Les Fêtes de Polymnie** Véronique Gens, Emöke Baráth, Aurélie Legay, [Mártha Stefanik], Mathias Vidal, Thomas Dolié, [Domonkos Blazsó], Purcell Choir, Orfeo Orchestra, György Vashegyi  
Glossa GCD 923502 (127' 03" – 2 CDs)

This *opéra-ballet* of 1745 cunningly manages to celebrate both the victory of Fontenoy and the marriage of the Dauphin. Each *entrée* contains flattering references to the King and the 'plots' revolve around notions of victory and idealised royal love. The choir and orchestra are Hungarian, the concertmaster is English (Simon Standage), the artistic supervision French and the soloists assorted, so it's a genuinely international anniversary tribute to the composer (rec. April 2014). The overture is stunning both in content and execution. It's then such a shame that the first vocal contribution is from another musical universe – full-on modern vibrato-laden soprano. So it becomes the usual story – male soloists fine, ladies often difficult to enjoy. The chorus is a little larger than we often hear in this repertoire with the result that they, too, do not achieve the keen focus of the orchestra. But the music is marvellous, especially the extensive chaconne in the first *entrée*. The booklet offers essays in English, French and German and the libretto in French and English. David Hansell

**Roman The 12 Keyboard Sonatas Nos 1-7** Anna Paradiso *hpscd/clavichord* 71' 44"  
BIS 2095 SACD

The Italian-born but Swedish-adopted Anna Paradiso is a persuasive advocate for the music of the Swedish composer Johan Helmich Roman whom she sees as significant, not just for Sweden, but on the European stage. As a young man Roman spent five years in London and, in his forties, he spent two years travelling through Europe. Otherwise he was active

in his home country. He had a strong interest in Neapolitan music and the influence of the Scarlattis is clear. His main surviving keyboard music is a set of twelve works, without titles, which survive in manuscript; Paradiso feels that they are best called sonatas and includes the first seven on this disc. She plays on three different instruments: a Guaracino copy by Masao Kimura and a Blanchet copy by Francois Paul Ciocca for the earlier sonatas, and a copy by Dan Johansson of a clavichord by the Stockholm-based Philip Jacob Specken, used to record the two most galant-style sonatas. The latter are in three movements, as opposed to the other sonatas which have between five and seven. This is attractive music in the European mainstream, played with intelligence and panache. Paradiso is particularly skillful at integrating ornaments into the texture so that they always seem natural. Tempi and registration are good, as is the recording quality. A very enjoyable recording. *Noel O'Regan*

**Scarlatti *Ombre et lumière*** Anne Queffélec  
Mirare MIR265 (77')

K27, 32, 54, 103, 109, 144, 145, 147, 149, 246, 260, 279, 318, 425, 481, 517 & 551

The French pianist Anne Queffélec first recorded a disc devoted to Scarlatti sonatas more than forty years ago, one of the first pianists to do so. She returns with a selection of largely lesser-known sonatas, played on a modern Steinway. She brings great sensitivity of touch and impeccable technique to her performances which brings out many nuances in the music, playing around with accents to point up hemiolas, for instance. The overall effect, however, is rather subdued. One is conscious that she is not using the full resources of the piano and so sonatas which would sound vigorous on the harpsichord sound rather dreamy here. This is even true of her final sonata, K27, which in other hands can be quite stormy. The disc's subtitle 'ombre et lumière', and references to the offices of Tenebrae in the liner notes, indicates something of an obsession with the pensive and sombre. Worth a listen, certainly, but not as a definitive version of these works. *Noel O'Regan*

**J. Stamitz *Violin Sonatas, Op. 6*** Stephan Schardt *vl*, Michael Behringer *hpsc*  
MDG 903 1862-6 (67' 16")

If your knowledge of Stamitz is limited to his association with "the Mannheim crescendo", hold on to your hat, as you're in

for a bit of a ride. He was appointed "first violin" of that orchestra in 1743, and what a violinist he must have been – this set of six sonatas is available for download from IMSLP so you can watch Schardt negotiate the difficulties with ease, which in itself is an achievement; the fact that he manages to make them sound musical is tribute enough to his talents. His partner, Behringer, for the most part takes the wise decision to restrict the right hand to chords while ensuring that the bass line is clearly enunciated. As with an earlier recording of sonatas by Telemann, there is something rather unflattering about the sound of the violin, so I must now attribute that to the instrument itself. Hopefully they will now go on to explore Graun and Benda? *BC*

**Telemann *Trios & Quatuors La Rêveuse***  
Mirare MIR267 (62')

TWV 42: G6, g1, a7; 43: e4, G12 & g1

This has to be one of my recommendations of the month – flawless playing from all concerned (Florence Bolton *gamba*, Stéphan Dudermel *vl*, Serge Saitta *fl*, Emily Audouin *gamba*, Carsten Lohff *hpsc*, Benjamin Perrot *theorbo*) both in the suavity of the sound, the perfect balance and neat interplay between the voices, and the keen sense of drama they bring to Telemann's outstanding chamber music. So often (and rather more with Telemann than many of his contemporaries) it seems to me that playing the notes is enough for some performers – La Rêveuse really get under his skin and, why not, give it a real going over in the French style; he was a master of balancing the voices (both in terms of apportioning melodic interest and using them in a register that means one will not overpower the others), but it still needs insight from the players and this group have that in buckets! And if it has this effect on me in the dreich days of the winter, I cannot wait to listen to it as Spring and Summer arrive. *BC*

**Vivaldi *Concerti a quattro, Sonata a tre*** Maria Giovanna Fiorentino *fl/rec*, I Fiori Musicali 50' 35"

Tactus TC 672255

RV84, 86, 91, 96, 100 & 103

This is an enjoyable collection of chamber concertos – none of them is particularly unknown, but all of them are neatly played on flute/recorder, violin, bassoon with continuo consisting of one plucker and a harpsichord. There are two sonatas for flute, violin and bassoon, another two where a recorder replaces the flute, and

trios for recorder with violin and bassoon. The playing is mostly neat (there is some occasional unevenness through the very virtuosic passages) and the recorded sound is bright. I thoroughly enjoyed this. *BC*

**Vivaldi *Opera Quinta*** Baltic Baroque, Grigori Maltizov 44'

Estonian Record Productions ERP7214

RV18, 30, 33, 35, 72 & 76

This is the latest instalment in an already blossoming series of releases from Baltic Baroque. It is the result of various sessions recorded between 2011 and 2014 in three different venues and involving the same number of violinists. Indeed, only one of the players is on every track, namely cellist, Sofia Maltizova. The Op. 5 set, intended as a companion to the six sonatas of Op. 2, consists of four solo sonatas and two trios. While some of the solo movements make extraordinary demands (perhaps Vivaldi was playing one when the fabled letter about there barely being a hair's width between this fingers and the bridge was written, for example), the trios are rather more modest and focus on the imitative interplay between the players. All three of Baltic Baroque's violinists are excellent musicians, crafting fine accounts of all six sonatas. Hopefully the series will continue. *BC*

**Domenico Gizzi *A star castrato in Baroque Rome*** Roberta Invernizzi S, I Turchini, Antonio Florio 56' 49"

Glossa GCD922608

Music by G. Bononcini, Costanzi, Feo, Porpora, A. Scarlatti, Sarro & Vinci

Another clever compilation of Italian opera arias and sinfonias, this time constructed around the career of Domenico Gizzi, a Neapolitan 'musico soprano' particularly active in early 18th-century Rome. The music is of consistently high standard, ranging from the high Baroque of Alessandro Scarlatti's *Telemaco* (a typically-energetic sinfonia and two contrasting arias for the eponymous hero) to the up-to-the-minute Neapolitan of Leonardo Vinci's *Didone Abbandonata* (including Araspe's fine "Su la pendice Alpina", where he compares his constancy to that of an Alpine oak.) I particularly enjoyed discovering Domenico Sarro's *Ginevra Principessa di Scozia* (the same libretto that Handel later set as *Ariodante*) – let the splendid "Cieca nave" whet your appetite. As a Scot, it was fascinating to learn that an opera on this libretto was performed for James Stuart, the Old Pretender, in

Rome in 1724! Roberta Invernizzi sings with her customary elegance and intelligence; da capos and cadenzas are splendidly ornamented. I Turchini are also on top form – the sinfonias fairly crackle with energy. Production is to Glossa's usual high standards; the notes, especially, are a model of scholarship, though it would have been good to know a little more of the dramatic context of the arias. I look forward to further issues in this series of 'Celebri Cantanti'.  
Alastair Harper

**The Harmonious Thuringian: Music from the early years of Bach and Handel**  
Terence Charlston hpcsd 70' 26"

Divine Art dva 25122

Music by Bach, J. C. F. Fischer, Handel, J. & J. P. Krieger, Kuhnau, Marchand, Merula, Pchaebel, Ritter & Zachow

Terence Charlston's latest project, part-funded by the Royal College of Music, is an estimable one, choosing music known to, or composed by, the young J.S. Bach and Handel and played on a copy by David Evans of an anonymous harpsichord of 1715 – the 'Harmonious Thuringian' of the CD's title. As Charlston explains in his comprehensive liner notes, the instrument now in the Bachhaus in Eisenach is a rare survival of the type of local harpsichord once common in Thuringia and Saxony and so is an appropriate one on which to record this music. It is surprisingly resonant – the soundboard extends over the wrest-plank – and is very well recorded here.

The music covers a wide and varied range, drawn from MS collections of the time. It includes a fine Prelude and Fugue by Johann Christoph Bach (by which of the composers of that name is not clear, as Charlston points out), pieces by Johann C. F. Fischer, both Krieger brothers (including an extended passacaglia by Johann Philipp), Johann Kuhnau (a Prelude which could have been a model for the C major Prelude in Book I of the WTC but also for the Prelude to Handel's E major Suite which follows it on the recording), Louis Marchand, Tarquinio Merula's fine *Capriccio Cromatico*, Christian Ritter and Friedrich W. Zachow. The recording ends with a shimmering and convincing performance of the Handel E major Suite. Charlton handles all this with confidence and style, giving the music time to breathe while keeping forward momentum. The association of a particular instrument with music appropriate to it gives this recording a real sense of purpose which is communicated in the playing. I enjoyed it very much.  
Noel O'Regan

**Majestie: Music for the Sun King's Court**  
Poeticall Musicke 68'01"  
Veterum Musica

François Couperin Premier, Second & Troisième Concerts Royaux, Michel Richard de Lalande Troisième Leçon pour le Mercredi, Troisième Leçon pour le Vendredi

Poeticall Musicke is an enterprising group of young London-based musicians specialising in chamber music of the early to mid Baroque era. They have come up with an interesting take on recording distribution, making their recordings available as free downloads as well as on CD (via their own record label, <http://veterummusica.com>). This recording was released last March in preparation for a tour in churches administered by the Churches Conservation Trust. It intersperses two of the three surviving Lalande *Leçons* with three of the four Concerts Royaux of Couperin. The soloists are Rafael Font, violin, and soprano Rosemary Galton, with Kate Conway and Joseph Chesshyre playing bass viol and a c1750 English bentside spinet. I found the instrumental works slightly more successful, not least in terms of intonation. Rafael Font is particularly good in his realisation of the complex ornaments, integrating them into the melodic flow of the music. In the 3rd Concert Royal (and in the *Échoes* of the 2nd Concert), Kate Conway provides an additional elegant melodic line in the *contrepas* passages and the *Muzette*. Rosemary Galton has an attractive voice, although the recording occasionally leaves her a little exposed. Andrew Benson-Wilson

**The Nations NZ Barok** 74' 17"  
atoll ACD 813

Music by Bach, Boyce, Brescianello, Geminiani, Muffat, Rameau & Telemann

Not everyone finds a 'round trip of Europe' selection to their taste. I found NZBarok's choice fairly typical, and much of the music can be found more satisfactorily performed by other groups. This Antipodean period string ensemble, nevertheless, plays stylishly, though the careful listener may detect occasional problems with ensemble and intonation. Brescianello's little Sinfonia, unknown to me, made a good opening item. The group dispensed with the doubling oboe parts in the Boyce symphony which always add 'spice' to the texture. The booklet notes are rather shallow, and I would have welcomed more informed detail on the music – there was no mention, for example, that Geminiani's op. 3, unusually uses a

string quartet (with viola) in the *concertino* group.  
Ian Graham-Jones

## CLASSICAL

**Agricola Christmas Cantatas** Berit Solset, Myriam Arbouz, Nicholas Mulroy, Matthias Vieweg SATB, Kölner Akademie, Michael Alexander Willens 81' 07"  
cpo 777 921-2

*Die Hirten bei der Krippe, Kündlich groß ist das gottselige Geheimnis, Uns ist ein Kind geboren*

Nine out of ten recordings of music by a composer called Agricola will feature the Renaissance composer; this namesake from the 18th-century "Berlin school" does not often make it on to disc, so this fine recording of three substantial Christmas pieces (which sadly arrived just too late for inclusion in our December issue) is to be welcomed. Not only for sheer novelty value – as regular readers will know, Willens and his Kölner Akademie are steadily building up an impressive discography of lesser-known music, all of it clearly worth of re-discovery. The four named singers are joined by four ripienists in the "choruses", and the eight voices cut through the band (33221) perfectly well. All three works are attractive – an interesting feature in *Uns ist ein Kind geboren* are the two *accompagnati*; although examples in which the voices recite in four-part harmony are known from composers of the previous generation (e. g., J. F. Fasch and Stölzel), I do not know of examples where they begin with all four voices, then divide into duetting pairs, then resume the Tutti. The connection with Fasch is underlined by the fact that the tenor aria *Wie freudig schallt in meinen Ohren die Post*, is heavily modelled on an aria from a 1757 birthday serenata for Catherine the Great; according to RISM, the opening movement is attributed to Johann Heinrich Rolle in no fewer than five sources. Learning that the source material (a score in an unidentified hand and a set of parts written by a copyist associated with serial compiler, C. P. E. Bach) is part of the Berlin Singakademie collection (an institution founded by Fasch's son, and also the location of the autograph materials for the 1757 serenata) would suggest to me that the work is a pasticcio; the RISM record also states that the score is full of deletions and changes, more or less confirming that it was based on earlier works. This might cast doubt on the attribution of a mass for two choirs and orchestras by Fasch, which also survives as a more usual one choir/orchestra version



– the larger setting was written out... by Agricola! For the musicology, watch this space, but for an enjoyable Xmas evening's musical entertainment, buy this CD – the singing and playing are first rate. BC

**C. P. E. Bach Symphonies** Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Rebecca Miller  
Signum Classics SIGCD395 (56' 36")  
Wq179, 182/4, 5 & 183/1, 3

Another tribute to last year's anniversary composer, and (I hate to say it) the same repertoire as several other such discs; were there really no other serious candidates for inclusion? And, at less than an hour, it might initially seem mean, but these are (impressively) live performances, and what we do get are very fine accounts of five excellent sinfonias, and one might even argue that no-one cannot listen to C. P. E. Bach's every twist and turn for any longer without some adverse effect. If you do not know any orchestral Bach, this would be an excellent introduction. BC

**C. P. E. Bach 300 years** Tini Mathot & Ton Koopman 135 years  
Challenge Classics CC72668  
CD1 Koopman: 6 Organ Sonatas CD2 Mathot: Fantasia

This 2-CD package is a re-release of two CDs issued earlier in 2014, one of Bach's organ Sonatas (TK) and one of pieces for fortepiano (TM) – Challenge CC72260 and CC72262. They come individually wrapped within a card cover. I reviewed the CD of the organ works in the August 2014 *EMR*, noting that his quirky interpretations were "far from what the composer intended". Although Tini Mathot has a very relaxed approach to pulse, I felt that this was in keeping with the style of the music – and she does generally respect Bach's ornamentation markings, and the notes that he wrote. Most of the pieces on her CD come from the pieces 'for connoisseurs and amateurs' published in Hamburg during the latter part of Bach's life, along with one earlier Sonata. Several of the Rondos, despite their rather innocuous title, are pieces of immense power, notably the E major example. The Fantasias hark back to the *Stylus Phantasticus* era in the mid-17th century. A moment of comparative repose comes with the inventively languid *Andante* and the relaxed following *Andantino grazioso* of the F minor Sonata (57/6). The Walter Hammerflügel (fortepiano – or, in Adelung's terms, as 'pantalon') is an interesting one. Now based in Hamburg, it has been restored to a condition similar to

one of the two other surviving examples in Poznan and Nuremberg, whereby the strings are hit by the bare wood of the hammers, rather than through the leather covering, added later. Andrew Benson-Wilson

**Mozart Piano Concertos** Ronald Brautigam *fp*, Carolyn Sampson *S*, Die Kölner Akademie, Michael Alexander Willens 56' BIS 2054 SACD

K449, 467 + 505 (*Ch'io mi scordi di te?*)

**Mozart Piano Concertos K238 & 246** Arthur Schoonderwoord *fp*, [Francisco Fernández-Rueda *T*], Cristofori 59' 15" Accent ACC 24296

+Concert arias K, 209, 210

The main difference between these two series is that, while Brautigam & Co. opt for orchestras that they feel represent the original performing conditions, the Accent series uses minimal forces. Where some have argued that Mozart perhaps played on stage accompanied by a band from the pit which would redress the uneven balance, Cristofori prefer to use solo strings in a more chamber music like setting. It is, I think, telling that both groups have opted to fill out their discs with concert arias – Brautigam with queen of HIP sopranos, Carolyn Sampson, while Schoonderwoord has tenor, Francisco Fernández-Rueda (though without obbligato "piano"). So much for the differences; both sets will challenge all your preconceptions of these works. *Elvira Madigan* would fairly have to frolic through her meadow – Brautigam is the best part of three minutes quicker than some older recordings! While he uses a copy of a Walther, Schoonderwoord opts to play his earlier concertos on a tangent piano, and bases the minimal approach on the surviving Salzburg materials. In both sets an especial pleasure are the cadenzas; the Accent set even goes to the lengths of giving alternative records of the first two tracks with alternative cadenzas (at least a minute shorter in each case). I have no idea how one chooses between two series with passionate claims on one's time; if I were a serious Mozartian (or early keyboard specialist), I fear I would have to subscribe to both! BC

**Mozart Horn Concertos, Horn Quintet\*** Pip Eastop, The Hanover Band, Anthony Halstead, Eroica Quartet\* 72' 48" Hyperion CDA68097

K407, 412, 417, 447 & 495

I am fairly certain that the release of this amazing CD will become a HIP watershed; the natural horn playing is (I think) utterly

unprecedented – and I am not even talking about the frankly amazing cadenzas! Pip Eastop plays the four concertos (2 – with a reconstruction by Anthony Halstead and Zachary Eastop – 4, 3 and 1 – this time with Stephen Roberts' help) and then the quintet with Peter Hanson, Vicci Wardman, Ian Rathbone and David Watkin. I have loved these pieces since I "discovered" classical music in my mid teens, but I have never listened to them with such excitement, not knowing what was in store from one moment to the next; I just love the way the sound of the horn changes when it leaves the natural series, and here it is so brilliantly captured (it helps when one of your assistant recording producers is also the conductor and a horn player himself!) But Eastop is not alone in this – it has been a while since I heard The Hanover Band, and it has been a joy listening to them again. The more intimate sounds of the quintet are, with Mozart's favourite doubled violas, equally delightful; just listen to the horn's first entry – the duetting with the violin above the three lower parts is deftly managed. Don't be surprised to see this nominated for many awards! BC

**Vanhal Four String Quartets** Lotus String Quartet 78' 34"

cpo 777 475-2

op. 1/4 in c, op. 33/2 in A, qts in G (1780) & E flat (1786)

Having performed several Vanhal\* string quartets in public, and much enjoyed the experience, it is great – at last – to have new recordings from a top-notch group. Their choice of works, from the earliest to the latest known pieces in the genre, does not so much attest to a huge development of the composer's musical style; essentially, Vanhal knew his audience (and, indeed, his market) well and he wrote in a style that would appeal to the widest possible range of aficionados and customers. There is a youthful energy to his faster movements, as well as an intensity that falls short of angst in the slower ones, that makes it instantly accessible. There is also energy aplenty in the Lotus's performances, with crisp articulation (not to the point of caricature!) and beautifully balanced phrasing. I sincerely hope these are the first four of many cpo will record; though he perhaps does lack the profundity of Mozart and Haydn, he certainly shares the latter's sense of humour and there are dozens of quartets that deserve to be much better known. BC

\*I have edited several works by the composer and published them under the name Vanhal,

but Paul Bryan has recently convinced me that the very few autographs begin very clearly with *W*; it seems the "standard" spelling is retrogressive assimilation by the post-war Czech authorities. Strictly speaking, it should also have an acute accent on the "n" but the font used for *EMR* does not include that character.

**A Viennese Quartet Party String Quartets by Haydn, Mozart, Vanhal & Dittersdorf**  
The Revolutionary Drawing Room  
Omnibus Classics CC5006 (2 CDs)  
Dittersdorf Qtt No. 6 in A Haydn Op. 50/1 Mozart K. 465 Vanhal Qtt in E flat (1786)

I am rather surprised that it has taken so long for someone to realise this project; Michael Kelly's legendary account of hearing these four composers playing string quartets together is surely all the excuse required to go looking for suitable repertoire for a recording? Not to worry, though – The Revolutionary Drawing Room are well worth the wait! Both of the quartets by Mozart and Haydn are well known, yet there was much to discover in these finely nuanced performances; those by Vanhal and Dittersdorf are tuneful and enjoyable, but (and I almost hate myself for committing this thought to print) these are two men who are comfortable in this medium, without any desire to try radical alternatives – both pieces are imaginative and tuneful, but there is none of the ultra-witty Haydn or any sign of the harmonic daring of the Mozart. Of course, they had different target audiences, with Vanhal more interesting in catering for amateurs and dilettantes. The Revolutionary Drawing Room are a formidable quartet, whose virtuosity is matched by their exemplary balance, fine characterisation of light and shade, and their insightful attention to every detail of the scores. The quartets are introduced by readings from Kelly's book, though it appears that two of them were transposed during production – it makes little difference, the background information they supply is as pertinent to one work as it is to another. Excellent. BC

#### VARIOUS

**Musik am Hofe zu Carlsruhe** Karlsruher Barockorchester, Kristin Kares 63' 36"  
Christophorus CHR 77391  
Music by Bodinus, Brandl, Danzi, Fesca, Käfer, Molter & Schwindl

This is an interesting idea – tracking the history of an ensemble through the works

written for it by court composers from the 18th to the 19th centuries. Opening with a 8-movement battle suite by Käfer, the disc continues with four symphonies by his successors (and, hence, a "history of the early sinfonia"), then Danzi's overture to *Turandot* (yes, really!) and to finish another overture, the rather anonymous op. 41 by Fesca. Musically I found the symphony by Brandl most interesting; its *Sturm und Drang* character and some rather judicious instrumental colour choices are a foretaste of the more Romantic sounds of the next generation. The booklet essay – a potted history of Karlsruhe and its music – also makes interesting reading. BC

**The Marian Collection** Choir of Merton College, Oxford, Peter Phillips, Benjamin Nicholas, Charles Warren org 67' 42"  
Delphian DCD34144  
Music by Byrd, Parsons & others

This CD is part of the 750th anniversary celebrations of the foundation of Merton College and appropriately is a selection of Marian compositions from the 15th to the 21st century. The Delphian engineers capture superbly this excellent choir in its home chapel and one of the main delights of the programme is precisely the engaging mix of early and contemporary music. However I shall concentrate on the repertoire which will be of primary interest to *EMR* readers and which is the portion of the programme directed by Peter Phillips. Palestrina's *Alma redemptoris mater* is given a glossily smooth reading, while John Nesbitt's Eton Choirbook *Magnificat* is a more animated affair, although there is a slightly forced sound from the soprano section and also some downward pitch pressure. Byrd's *Salve regina* finds the choir back on safer ground, and the performance of Parsons' delectable *Ave Maria* is beautiful, although I could still hear some slight but annoying undercutting by the sopranos. The early content of the CD is as you see modest in scope, but this as I say is to miss the programme's chief delight, which is the juxtaposition of the old and new material, as well as the bonus of some established classics by Bruckner and Stravinsky.

D. James Ross

**Remembering Alfred Deller** James Bowman, Robin Blaze cT, John Turner, Laura Robinson recs, Tim Smedley vlc, Dave Bainbridge guitar, Ian Thompson hpscd 59' 36"

Divine Art dda 25114

Music by Blow, Handel, Williams and others

It is appropriate that this CD should be mentioned in *EMR* even though only three of the pieces it includes were written before the middle of the 20th century. Deller was an important figure in the development of the post-war early music revival, not just for his counter-tenor voice but also for the Deller Consort, which he formed with the purpose of giving historically informed performances of early music. Michael Tippett and Morley College are also central to this story. It was Tippett who discovered Deller's countertenor voice at Canterbury Cathedral and engaged him to sing in concerts at the College, where Walter Bergmann was already accompanist to Tippett's Morley Choir. Bergmann was to become one of Deller's main accompanists. This CD starts with his *Pastorale* for counter-tenor and recorder, dedicated to Deller and first performed by him in Canterbury in 1946, and ends with his attractive set of *Three Songs for countertenor and guitar*, which deserve to be better known. Both Bergmann and Tippett were associated with the music publisher Schott and its early music publications. Tippett's *Four Inventions* for two recorders were written for the Society of Recorder Players, of which he became President, and first performed by Walter Bergmann and Freda Dinn. Another composer associated with Morley College was Peter Racine Fricker whose *Elegy: The Tomb of Saint Eulalie*, Op. 25 for counter-tenor, cello and harpsichord was first performed by Deller with Desmond Dupré and George Malcolm at the Wigmore Hall in 1955. The longest and probably best known work on this recording is John Blow's *Ode on the Death of Mr. Henry Purcell* for two counter-tenors, two recorder and continuo, which is positioned between two trio sonatas for recorders and continuo, in A minor by William Williams and in F by Handel. I like the way good breaks are made between the tracks to maintain separation between this very interesting collection of dissimilar pieces. The informative booklet contains comprehensive notes about all the music and an introduction by Mark Deller.

Victoria Helby

**Sing, ye birds a joyous song** Yale Schola Cantorum, Simon Carrington 65' 57"  
Delos DE 3458

**Taverner Western Wynd Mass** Gibbons *Glorious and Powerful God* + 2nd Evening Service (Mag & Nunc) Tallis *Te lucis ante terminum* + Richard Rodney Bennett *The Glory and the Dream*

Recorded live in concert, this CD begins with a nicely spirited account of John Taverner's *Western Wind Mass*, preceded

by the eponymous song. There are occasional tentative entries and a few 'rabbit-in-headlights' moments and a little bit of background noise and the CD misses out the Credo, presumably due to an unusable take. Such is the energy and confidence of the singing that it would be nice if the ensemble went into a studio at some point and committed an edited performance to CD. After Sir Richard Rodney Bennett's *The Glory and the Dream*, the group sing Gibbons' *Glorious and Powerful God* and the *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis* from the Second Evening Service. Again the singing is idiomatic and effective, with some fine solo contributions from Dann Coakwell and Paul Max Tipton. The CD concludes with Tallis' *Te lucis ante terminum*, delicately performed. This sounds like a group with considerable potential who would benefit from a quieter recording context and the possibility of slight editing to produce a fine CD.

D. James Ross

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#### Musique d'abord

Another sizeable batch of releases on the *Harmonia Mundi* budget series has arrived. Styled as miniature vinyl discs and packaged in neat card tri-folds without any real documentation, they are (in chronological order, and all prefaced HMA1951): see next two columns

**Festa La Spagna: 32 contrapunti** Huelgas-Ensemble, Paul Van Nevel (799, 52' 26")  
Festa's 125 variations on the *bassadanza*, La Spagna, are a remarkable testament to the man's intellectual and imaginative powers. Van Nevel's group plays 32 of them on recorders, dulcians, sackbuts, and gambas.

**Le Jeune Missa Ad Placitum, Magnificat** – Ensemble Clément Janequin, Dominique Visse (607, 53' 48")

There are very few good recordings of music by Claude Le Jeune in the catalogue, so this 1997 recording is welcome back. As well as the two pieces in the title, the disc includes *Tristitia obsedit me* and *Benedicite Dominum*.

**Monteverdi Scherzi musicali** Maria Cristina Kiehr, Stephan MacLeod, Concerto Soave, Jean-Marc Aymes (855, 72' 39")

Recorded in 2005, this disc samples the composer's smaller scale secular output from throughout his life. The singers are accompanied by two fiddles, cello, harp, archlute/guitar and claviorganum.

**Buxtehude Membra Jesu nostri** Cantus Cölln, Konrad Junghänel (912, 74' 06")

This was among the first attempts at a one-to-a-part MJN and remains one of the best. Cantus Cölln were on top form here, and produced a whole series of wonderful recordings of 17th-century German music. They seem to have fallen out of favour with HM, which is a shame.

**Charpentier Leçons de Ténèbres du Mercredi Saint** Concerto Vocale, René Jacobs (005, 62' 39")

The oldest of this series, this 1982 set features sopranos Judith Nelson and Anne Verkinderen, as well as the director, with three very famous "accompanists" – their Christian names are Wieland, William and Konrad... Even the publicity refers to this as "legendary", so to write a review would be irreverent.

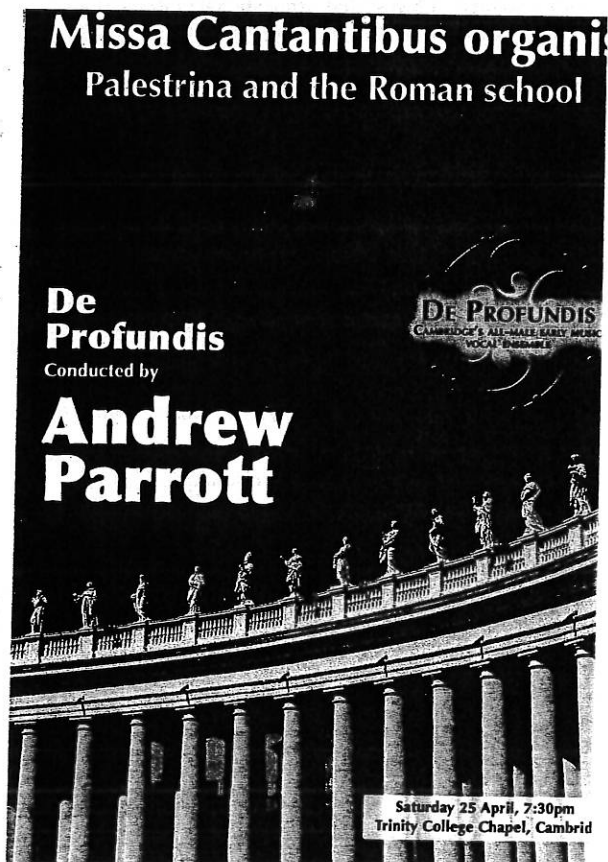
**Bach Magnificat, Christmas cantata BWV63** – Collegium Vocale Gent, Philippe Herreweghe (782, 61' 49")

This 2003 recording features Carolyn Sampson, Ingeborg Danz, Mark Padmore and Sebastian Noack. The Magnificat is given in its E flat Christmas version with the interpolated seasonal movements.

**Bach Violin Concerto BWV 1052, Double Concertos** – Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin (876, 63' 35")

The other three concertos on this CD are the F major version of Brandenburg 4 in which the violin is replaced by the harpsichord, the C minor for oboe/violin, and the concerto for two harpsichords in the same key (aka the double violin concerto!). The soloists are not named.

Other releases are *Chants de la cathédrale de Benevento* Ensemble Organum, Marcel Pérès (476, 73' 23") and *Improvisations au zarb: Classical Traditions of Iran* Djamchid Chemirani (388, 43' 21").



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Conducted by  
**Andrew Parrott**

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Andrew Parrott is best known for over 50 pioneering recordings of pre-classical repertoire from Machaut to Handel with the Taverner Consort, Choir and Players which he founded in 1973. The pre-eminent early music conductor of his generation, in 2014 he received the Lifetime Achievement Award of the York Early Music Festival.