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Michael Bagenal (1921-1998)

It was not until we had bought what we had intended to be a weekend cottage in Godmanchester in 1981 that we realised that the intriguing Tudor house next door was the home of Michael and Alison Bagenal. Michael had been history advisor to the county education authority and Alison had taught violin; in their retirement they used music as a basis for getting children of all ages to understand the past, and worked at schools throughout Britain and also in New Zealand. One of their last visits was to the special school which our children attend; the Babs (a name used by all, including themselves) had an easy rapport with even the most handicapped child and they are still remembered there with pleasure.

A year or so ago, Clifford was leaving the cottage (where his mother now lives) and Michael hastened after him to say cheerfully that he had leukaemia and had been given two years to live: he was going to devote that time to playing Byrd's consort songs. The regular hospital trips were exhausting; once when he had to stay in for a few days, we found him delighted that Alison had brought him a disc of Purcell's Funeral Sentences. He died on 12th March, aged 77.

Michael and Alison lived in a very different world to most of us, one in which past and present unselfconsciously coexisted, which was apparent merely from seeing their house and garden. A friend some twenty years Michael's senior once told us that when he kissed her hand on meeting her in a supermarket it felt the most natural of gestures and not at all incongruous or false. After 49 years of married life they had become such a perfect pair that it will be difficult to think of Alison alone. They seem to have lived their life much more together than most couples. They were hospitable and kind, and marvellous conversationalists, since they always seemed so interested in what one was saying, regardless of the topic. Michael's passion for education often cropped up in conversation with Elaine (both being school governors); he was always ready to discuss the absurdities of governmental interference in education. Although sceptical, he was never cynical or mean-minded, but debated everything with the same zest as he approached music-making. Teachers and early-music players throughout the country will remember him for his enthusiasm and panache. Michael was skilled with his hands, and the house is full of instruments that he made, a memorial to one aspect of a rich and varied life.

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Books and Music

Clifford Bartlett

TRANSLATION

Music Discourse from Classical to Early Modern Times: Editing and Translating Texts. Papers given at the Twenty-Sixth Annual Conference on Editorial Problems University of Toronto, 19-20 October 1990 Edited by Maria Rika Maniates. University of Toronto Press, 1997. x + 148pp, £25.00 ISBN 0 8020 0972 7

This is both intriguing and disappointing; an important general issue is aired, but the reader merely gets five independent papers advocating conflicting solutions with no discussion. There must have been arguments over meals and at the bar: could not the editor include some sort of report of them? Claude V. Palisca begins by stressing that a translation should be readable and not full of untranslated or cognate technical terms. All very well, except that if the student is going to read articles about *res facta*, it is a good idea to know when a theoretical text he is reading uses the term, and there is no obvious English expression that he can assume will represent it. To take a more recent example, it is impossible to find a satisfactory word to represent *viola* in the 16th & 17th century; ideas of what it means at any time and place are changing and the only useful translation is one that does not translate it. Such a policy, advocated here by George Dimitri Sawa for translating medieval Arabic, is far better at providing a basis for study. Alan C & William R Bowen illustrate the different attitudes of medieval translators by the distorted (from our viewpoint) way in which Boethius handles Ptolemy – but beware of modern scholars similarly paraphrasing old texts and only quoting passages that back their own theories! Walter Kurt Kreyszig, discussing Gaffurio, notes the absence of quotation marks: how does one distinguish quotation from paraphrase, even if the writer cites the source?

It is puzzling that it takes seven years to get a short book like this into print. Assuming that it is not the publisher's fault, part of the problem must have been getting the authors to turn oral presentations into formal academic papers; so they must have spent ages checking sources and adding batteries of foot- (or rather end-) notes, few of which are relevant to the topic that brought the contributors together. Surely the specific examples which each writer produces were used for discussion among those present: why is this concealed in the published version? I wish the academic world would be more flexible in its forms of publication. The paper I have not yet mentioned seems a bit peripheral, though it is of considerable interest: James Grier on Adémar de Chabannes and the liturgy for the Feast of St. Martial, with particular reference to the interaction of tropes and antiphons. The latter were added to insert into the tropes and are incomplete in isolation.

FALSE BEAUTY

Thomas Brothers *Chromatic beauty in the late medieval chanson: an interpretation of manuscript accidentals* Cambridge UP, 1997. xiii + 226pp, £40.00 ISBN 0 521 55051 3

This book is concerned with *falsa musica causa pulchritudinis*, i.e. accidentals present because the composer wants them, not because they avoid improper intervals. The author argues strongly, cogently and occasionally repetitively that, at least in his chosen area (French song from the trouvères to Dufay), we should consider that the notation or absence of accidentals is a matter of deliberate intent, not merely the outward sign of a widespread practice of inflection practised by performers. He makes a very strong case. What worries me, though, is that, if it is true, why should accuracy of accidentals be so much more variable between sources than the accuracy of notes? Does Brothers really understand the composers' intention better than the scribes who copied their music? Individual errors one can understand; but the erratic presence of sharps and flats in different sources surely justifies the assumptions accepted by scholars for the last century. Despite his strong statement that we should believe the sources, it is curious that he prints an excerpt from Dufay's *Ave Regina celorum* on p. 186 with only the accidentals of the source, then tells us in a footnote that several accidentals are missing from it and can be restored from the Mass. It is, however, an extremely stimulating book: I'm sure that experts on the subject will chew over it for years to come, and editors and performers will take much more note of odd accidentals and not, as they have sometimes done, suppress them.

It is so nice to read a Cambridge book with proper footnotes, even though some are so long that one might excuse a designer for thinking that they really must be hidden. But sadly the Music Handbooks reviewed on p. 5 revert to printing them at the end (except that the Beethoven has proper footnotes to its Preface).

SIENA

Frank A. D'Accone *The Civic Music: Music and Musicians in Siena during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. University of Chicago Press, 1997. xxiii + 862pp, £55.95.

It is painting that one naturally thinks of in connection with Siena, then perhaps the architecture, the townscape or the Palio – the horse-race in the town-centre arena that takes place every year on my birthday (though I've never been there then to celebrate it). Music comes a long way behind. No famous composers, and the purpose of this book is not

to exalt minor names to a higher status. It is rather a magnificently rich study of the institutions and musicians in a well-documented city written by someone who understands more than most writers of such studies what performers will want to know. Having just been listening to the new recording of Italian dance music by Les Haulz et les Bas (see review on p. 14), I will illustrate this from the extensive section on the *piffari*. Among other topics, the increase of the band from three to four by the acquisition of a trombone is covered, as is the change to musical literacy in the mid-15th century. Open this at almost any page, and something interesting catches the eye. Try p. 305, for instance, where in 1522 boys and men were singing a polyphonic mass with cornetts while in the organ loft a boy was 'sweetly singing the lascivious words of a love song' (the passage needs to be read in conjunction with p. 293: cross-referencing is not precise enough). The boy was presumably singing the *cantus firmus* of a mass on a secular theme: interesting that it happened and that it was unusual, interesting too that cornetts were playing at a mass in 1522.

I must confess that I have not yet read this book through: I thought it better to draw attention to it now rather than put it aside until I can finish it (which probably will not be until I next have a long plane trip, even though it is rather heavy to carry around). But I can certainly recommend it. The prose sections are readable, much information is shown in tabular form, many documents are quoted, the music examples are mostly complete pieces, there is a biographical register of musicians and a thorough index. And every time I open it I find something interesting. For instance, on p. 584, a list of duties of the wind band in 1570 includes playing at the Elevation at mass.

LUTE

The Lute Society seems more active of late and I have two new publications and a journal here. Martin Shepherd has edited vol. 1 of *The Complete Works of John Danyel* containing the lute music (£5.00 to members, £7.00 to non-members). This has four solos – *Rosamund* in two versions, a *Pavan*, *Monsieurs Almayne* and *Mrs Anne Grene her leaves bee green* – and two duets: a *Passymeasures Galliard* and a *Fancy*, the latter with four versions of a second part by Bob Spencer, David Miller, Lyle Nordstrom and Stewart McCoy. The fact that the last is in the favoured position of being on a loose sheet so that the second player has his own copy no doubt implies that it is the real McCoy. There is also a version of the Anne Green piece in normal tuning rather than one which features her initials, and the volume concludes with *Daniells Jigge*, of uncertain authorship. There are more duets in vol. 2 of *Lute Duets from the Phalèse Anthologies* vol. 2, edited by David Humphreys (£10.00/£15.00). This includes five duets for lutes tuned a fourth apart and nine for lutes a fifth apart. (Vol. 1, for lutes in unison and a tone apart, was originally published by Sul Tasto Editions edited by Lynda Sayce and is now available from the Lute Society at £10.00/£15.00). These books have thorough introductions and critical notes and are clearly printed.

The 1995 Journal (vol. XXXV) is dedicated to Diana Poulton, who died that year, though the copyright date is 1997. Jonathan le Cocq shows that the pieces with voice parts and tablature in Le Roy's publications for lute or guitar don't work as lute songs; whatever Le Roy's purpose, the intabulations are self-sufficient. June Yakeley and Monica Hall describe the related Catalan and Castilian *alfabeto* systems and give a list of sources. Peter Király produces new information on the life of Besard and Donald Gill assembles facts about the 17th century gittern and the *englisch Zitterlein*. I would hope that readers who are interested in plucked instruments will be members and receive the Journal.

CAMBRIDGE MUSICK

Diane Kelsey McColley *Poetry and music in seventeenth-century England* Cambridge University Press, 1997. xvii + 311pp, £40.00 ISBN 0 521 59363 8

I've just been re-reading a short story by Asimov set in a future in which cross-disciplinary study is illegal. It is rare enough now, so it is bold of Diane McColley to cross the border separating EngLit from musicology, and especially to centre her study on Cambridge, since, as well as its connection with Herbert and Milton (though not Donne), it happens to be the base of two eminently successful cross-disciplinary scholars, Christopher Page and John Stevens. But she lacks their professional mastery of musical scholarship and sensibility. Her subject is the possibility that, in addition to the many references to music, the works of early 17th-century poets might be more fundamentally influenced by music than is generally thought. Her own experience seems to be chiefly as an amateur choral singer and her discussions of the music are not precise enough to stand the weight of scholarly argument. Even at a glance there is an inconsistency: poetic texts are quoted in old spelling, but the music examples are in reduced note-values and transposed. Similarly, the literary argument is precise in its chronological scope, but the musical references hop around over a much wider period. Dunstable occurs nine times in the index; although Morley quoted him, his music cannot have been known to 17th-century poets. The book has just fallen open at the section on Milton senior's setting of *Precamur sancte Domine*. There is no mention that the text is the second verse of a hymn; the reader needs to know whether it is chant-based or in motet style and by p. 179 of the book, we are unwilling to take the author's use of the word 'motet' as being carefully enough chosen to imply the latter. This lack of awareness of function and style is typical. On the next page, Morley's *Nolo mortem peccatoris* is called an anthem, but surely a literary scholar should be aware that its text is a rare survival of the pre-reformation carol?

There is a glossary for non-musicians, informing us that Passion Sunday is the same as Palm Sunday (does the 1559 BCP really say that?) and that a melisma should strictly contain five or more notes: who fixed the number? A hymn is defined as 'a song, anthem, or poem of praise', which makes sense in terms of poetic usage but not in a 'glossary'

of musical and liturgical terms'. Musicians need a less restricted glossary encompassing technical lit-crit words such as *polysemy* (pp. 3 & 4).

These weaknesses are no great handicap for the musical reader: he can make his own adjustments and concentrate on the poetic argument, which may (as with any enthusiast) press the evidence a little too far but will open his eyes to the depth to which musical ideas and understanding penetrates English poetry of the period, even if some of the comparisons of musical and poetic form don't quite convince. If I venture in a subsequent issue into an editorial on the theological importance of just intonation and the cosmological error of bad intonation, blame Diane McColley.

CAMPRA DE PROFUNDIS

André Campra *De profundis* (*Grands motets, volume 2*) édition de Catherine Massip (*Musica Gallica*). Salabert, 1997. xii + 46pp, £16.50 (from UMP).

This is dated 1723 in the sole, probably autograph MS, though the editor seems suspicious of it for reasons that are not made entirely explicit. I think she believes that the motet must have been written for the Chapelle royale but is not the setting performed in September since Campra was not on duty then, but the argument needs expansion. As befits the text, it is a sombre piece, partly in F minor. It is scored for the usual four-part French texture of unison treble instruments (violins, flutes and oboes), two viola parts (C1 & C2 clefs) and bass. The user needs to be told whether the *flûtes* are *traversière* by 1723. The original clefs of the choir are G2 C3, C4, F3 & F4, set out in the edition as STTBB, taking the upper tenor to Bb. There are also four soloists, G2 C3, C4 & F3. The F3 part sings in a trio but has no solo. The ranges on page x give A as the top note for the *haute-contre* but it is in fact Bb. The MS has no indication of continuo instrument; since the introduction devotes a column to other matters of scoring, it is a pity that nothing is said about normal practice. It looks a fine piece, worth performing (it is pleasing that *grands motets* are now being recorded), and the edition is a pleasure to read: these criticisms are quite petty. Introduction and commentary are in English as well as French.

CALDARA FOR CELLO

Antonio Caldara *Sechzehn Sonaten für Violoncello und Basso continuo...* [edited by] Brian W. Pritchard (*Diletto musicale* 1178-9) Doblinger, 1997. Vol 3: Sonata IX-XII. Vol. 4: XIII-XVI. £19.00 each set.

With Caldara's star now rising, and with cellists apparently eager for baroque repertoire, the completion of this set of 16 sonatas written between April and July 1735, perhaps for Count Schönborn-Wiesentheid, is welcome. The sonatas are quite varied in their form and style. No. XIII in F minor has an archaic, fugal opening movement, though its subsequent three movements are modern enough. One wonders

whether the assumption that the accompaniment should be cello and harpsichord is too prescriptive: while the absence of figuring is not conclusive, since the source is a score, the possibility of two cellos without keyboard should not be ignored. The keyboard realisation here by David Vine is quite elaborate and artistic. I'm sure it works well when he plays it on his instrument, but it is difficult for a player to adjust if it doesn't work elsewhere or for him. Is it sensible for the right hand to be high, clear of the cello tessitura, or should it keep low? (Not a rhetorical question: I would like to hear from players.) And a last question: do cellists prefer tenor clef sections to be transferred to the bass when they stay within a fifth of middle C?

18th-CENTURY HANDBOOKS

A Handbook for Studies in 18th-century English Music Edited by Michael Burden and Irena Cholij. Oxford: Burden & Cholij. Vol. VII, 1996. 46pp. ISBN 0 9512785 9 2.
Vol. VIII, 1997. 72pp. ISBN 0 9531708 0 2.
Each vol. £6.50 (from New College, Oxford, OX1 3BN)

Vol. VII has two articles. Jennifer Thorp deals with John Walsh as publisher of dance notation, revealing another aspect of his piratical practices. John Caldwell discusses editorial procedures and the needs of the nineties. All potential editors should read it, though the wisdom of the opening pages gets dissipated into detailed discussion of the somewhat untypical problems of John Reading's copies of Croft. More on John Caldwell and editing procedures next month in connection with the latest, revolutionary EECM volume. Vol VIII begins with handlists of two collections of 18th-century music now at Cardiff. Sir Herbert Mackworth was MP for Cardiff from 1766 to 1790 and his library gives a fair idea of the sort of music a man of his status might have in his home. The collection was virtually untouched from 1797 and is now in the University Library in Cardiff. Theodore Edward Aylward, a pupil of S. S. Wesley, was organist and conductor of the Cardiff Musical Society from 1887. He sold his library to Cardiff Public Library in 1926 for £250. This is a more diffuse collection and is less interesting as an indicator of taste. The 18th-century items briefly surveyed here will certainly need closer study. There must still be plenty of collections around Britain which need examination – Brian Clark spent some time last year cataloguing the collection at Dundee Public Library. A calendar of advertised performances involving the piano and harpsichord in London 1750-1800 is based on Simon McVeigh's database of London concerts. There are two tables, one of solo and concerto performances, the other of chamber music and concertante works, followed by an index of performers, but not of composers – so Haydn is missing, despite having tinkled a few arpeggios in a symphony.

BENDA SONAT(IN)AS

Georg Benda *17 Sonatas for keyboard (clavichord, harpsichord, or piano)* Edited by Christopher Hogwood. Oxford UP, 1997. x + 169pp, £75.00 ISBN 0 19 3722453

Georg Benda 35 Sonatinas for keyboard (clavichord, harpsichord, or piano) Edited by Timothy Roberts. Oxford UP, 1997. ix + 86pp, £45.00 ISBN 0 19 3722445

Benda's music is not likely to feature very strongly in the libraries of our keyboard-playing readers; but I hope that will now change. Of the generation of C. P. E. Bach, his music may be slightly less quirky and imaginative, but it is certainly rewarding to play and generally not too difficult. The fact that the first-choice instrument is likely to have been the clavichord will particularly commend it to some, though the music is not so idiomatic that harpsichord, fortepiano or even the modern piano should be ruled out. The major source is a series of six anthologies *Sammlung vermischter Clavier- und Gesangstück* which Benda issued during the 1780s after his retirement from the court of Friedrich III of Saxe-Gotha. A few earlier sources show by their differences that Benda sometimes revised his earlier music. Experts might have preferred a facsimile of the *Sammlung*, but its use of the soprano clef would deter some potential players, while so enticing an edition as this may win converts to Benda's music. The price may be a slight deterrent, but the volumes have sturdy cloth bindings and the music is well printed in all respects. I learnt recently (on the authority of Endeavour Morse) that the superfluous comma before the 'and' of each title, which I associate with Oxford usage, is indeed known as 'the Oxford comma'.

CLASSICS

John Irving Mozart: *The 'Haydn' quartets* (Cambridge Music Handbooks). Cambridge UP, 1998. vii + 105pp. hb £24.95 ISBN 0 521 58475 2, pb £8.95 ISBN 0 521 58561 9

Robin Stowell Beethoven: *Violin Concerto* (Cambridge Music Handbooks). Cambridge UP, 1998. xi + 126pp. hb £25.00 ISBN 0 521 45159 0, pb £7.95 ISBN 0 521 45775 0

Tia DeNora *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius: Musical Politics in Vienna, 1792-1803* University of California Press, 1995. pb 1997. xvii + 232pp, \$15.95. ISBN 0 520 21158 8

The two Cambridge Guides are very different. The Mozart is more limited, in that it concentrates on analysis of the works in hand, with just a brief preliminary chapter on his earlier quartets, not mentioning any context to which they might belong. Its core is a description of each work in turn, perhaps a little old-fashioned but none the worse for that. A chapter on more general matters gets bogged down in rhetoric: it is fine as far as it goes, but there are surely other points that could be made. Isn't it better to use *topos* rather than *topic* outside a treatise on rhetoric? (*Topicality* as a section heading is surely tongue-in-cheek.) Robin Stowell covers a wider range of topics (in the usual sense) and I was surprised that it is only slightly longer than the Mozart. He deals with a key work in the repertoire of violin concertos, one that was written at a pivotal time in the development of the instrument and the style of playing it, though curiously for a conservative player, Franz Clement, and in a style that suited him. Yet the early performers who made it successful probably played modernised and less mellifluous

instruments. Who should the historically-minded modern performer imitate? A chapter on textual problems is supplemented by an appendix on major variations. There is a very clear account of the structure. Anyone playing the work, however unacademic, should study this handbook.

Tia DeNora has nothing to say about Beethoven's music, but has written a stimulating account of how Beethoven became the great classical composer, successor to Mozart and Haydn. Staking claim to the best music was part of the oneupmanship of the Viennese nobility. Although they had disbanded their private music establishments a little earlier, they maintained their musical status (an aspect of their position in society as a whole) by monopolising for their private edification a protégé who could create music of distinction that was above the heads of the lower strata of society. DeNora does not discuss what would have happened if there had been no composer of Beethoven's genius (a key word here); presumably another tack would have been adopted (maybe the creation of Haydn and Mozart as unsurpassable classics like Handel in England). What she has to say is fascinating, bringing to a head the implications of much recent research. Ultimately, the question asked is whether Beethoven is a great composer (assuming that we still believe in such a concept) absolutely, or whether he is so because we are still influenced by the propaganda of a group of aristocrats two centuries ago: having established the idea of Beethoven as a great composer, he is now axiomatically that, and those who disagree are by that very fact assumed to be lacking in taste. A stimulating book.

B.V. MUZIEKHANDEL SAUL B. GROEN

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A SIGNIFICANCE OF FLUTES

Anthony Rowland-Jones

The recent exhibition in the National Gallery devoted to Holbein's *The Ambassadors* has given special prominence to a picture in which musical imagery plays an important part. The musical background to the picture was emphasised by a concert given by Philip Thorby's group Frottola with Jennie Cassidy on 28 January at the Gallery.

We are fortunate that our own National Gallery, quite apart from its spacious display of the excellent permanent collection, likes to put on small exhibitions, often in only one room, which are exceptionally well presented, with information panels and guides, and subsidiary material, that reveal new insights into a picture or small group of related pictures. The collection of objects identical to those that appear in the newly-restored *Ambassadors* was particularly intriguing.

It seemed to me, however, that the exhibition's display panels did not do full justice to the musical imagery of the picture, concentrating more on the likely unsuccessful outcome of the ambassadors' mission than on the theme of reconciliation, even though reference was made in the bibliography of the exhibition catalogue to the erudite article by Mary Rasmussen on 'The case of the flutes in Holbein's *The Ambassadors*' in the February 1995 issue of *Early music* (XXIII/1, pp.114-123). As this article points out, the musical imagery is primarily supportive of the ambassadors' hopes of reconciliation between Catholic and Protestant views of Christianity, although, like the famous elongated skull across the picture, some details of the musical imagery also suggest that the ambassadors would not achieve their purpose.

Mary Rasmussen points out (p.115) that the music that lies between the lute and the case of flutes, showing the tenor part of Johann Walther's 1525 settings of two hymns translated from Latin into German by Martin Luther (himself more a conciliatory reformer than a militant protestant), were chosen as works common to the Protestant and Catholic faiths, the *Veni Sancte Spiritus* from the Pentecost sequence being particularly linked with catholicism. The choice of the music is wholly conciliatory, not one-sided.

Lutes and flutes or recorders have a complex symbolism. Other than the war-like connection of flutes, which Rasmussen may perhaps have over-emphasised, both instruments – one on its own, and the other, very significantly, only in consort – create harmony. Moreover, they are soft instruments, associated with peace and love, unlike trumpets and harsh shawms. This imagery can be carried further, as in Francesco Cossa's fresco for the month of April, *The Triumph of Venus* (1470) in the Schifanoia Palace at Ferrara, although whether or not the extended imagery was in Holbein's mind, or conjured up in the minds of those who saw the

picture, is very conjectural. Because of their shape and their soft beguiling sounds, both instruments are associated with courtship, physical love, pregnancy and regeneration. If the ambassadors' mission were successful, it could last to the benefit of future generations.

But as many commentators have pointed out, all is not well. The lute has a broken string. This may simply state that the threat to perfect harmony is already present, and the mission of the ambassadors is, as it were, to mend and retune the string. Or it could imply the likely failure of their difficult task. The nearby presence of the skull, which like the globe and the broken lute-string, and flutes or recorders, became frequent symbols of the transitoriness of earthly affairs, and of the pleasures of music, in many later *Vanitas* pictures, suggests that the latter interpretation – a mission with little chance of success – is the more likely.

A close examination of the case of flutes bears this out. A feature noticed by my wife but not referred to in the *Early Music* article (it may not have been apparent until the picture was cleaned) is that the case seems to be made to hold at least one more flute than those actually shown. A flute is missing. Of course four flutes can produce perfect harmony, but cases of flutes and recorders usually contained enough instruments, six perhaps, to enable players to select those that would accommodate best to the pitch of the music. To be short of an instrument is to lose this flexibility. Is Holbein, in the most incredibly detailed symbolism of this picture, telling us that unwillingness or inability to accommodate or compromise will jeopardise the totally praiseworthy intentions of the two ambassadors in their attempts to restore full harmony between conflicting faiths?



LONDON MUSIC

Andrew Benson-Wilson

The adventurous Purcell Room series of early music concerts continues to entertain. January saw a distinctly bucolic performance by the Mellstock Band of music of Hardy's Wessex. The Harp Consort also stretched the boundaries of early music in their Spanish Jeepsies concert on 23 February. Some of the pieces were familiar, but not as interpreted by the gifted harpist Andrew Lawrence-King, with Steve Player (dancer and guitar) and Hille Perl (viola da gamba). The first group of pieces to be given a Spanish spin were English. With strummed guitar and plucked gamba (used as a vertical bass guitar), there was a distinctly Iberian step to the syncopated rhythms of Dowland's Earl of Essex Galliard. An all too brief demonstration of dance steps was a foretaste of things to come – the evening culminated in the effervescent Steve Player acting out both sides of a naval battle between England and France, with assistance from a tricorn hat, that ended with his English persona killing his French alter ego. Also given the Spanish treatment were composers as diverse as Holborne, Couperin, Sainte-Colombe, Marais and Carolan. In a lovely twist of trans-European harmony, Andrew Lawrence-King explained how Purcell was influenced by French and Italian music, both of which had, in turn, been influenced by Spain, and then went on to play the Scots Tune in a distinctly Irish way on the harp. Many of the pieces in the programme used a ground bass, giving plenty of opportunity for inventive improvisations and divisions. His interpretation of Purcell's *Ground in Gamut* was particularly creative. It is not often that early music concerts are advertised as 'sexy and sizzling' but, as far as my two female companions were concerned, Steve Player apparently fitted the bill. An entertaining evening, but perhaps not for the purist.

1998 is turning into the year of the Spaniard, with the combined anniversaries of Victoria and Phillip II. The first of two concerts by Peter Phillips and the Tallis Scholars celebrating the music of Victoria took place at St John's, Smith Square on 24 February. In the first half, we heard motets by Guerrero, Vivanco, Alonso Lobo and Victoria. The second half was the much loved Requiem Mass, written in 1603 for the funeral of Victoria's employer (and Phillip II's sister), the Dowager Empress Maria. The musical and emotional high-point of the concert was the funeral motet in the Requiem Mass, *Versa est in luctum* (versions of the same text by Vivanco and Lobo had been heard in the first half). It was here that the Tallis Scholars demonstrated the light and shade that had been lacking from much of the rest of the concert. A steady crescendo led to the intense harmonic slide at 'the voice of them that weep' and the impassioned plea at 'Spare me, O Lord', before the piece died away to the end of the verse. The Tallis Scholars (twelve of them on this occasion) sang

with vigour and energy. Their harmonically rich tone has a real edge to it – it is strong in overtones, leading to superb clarity of projection and richness of timbre. But it also means that the slightest lapse in intonation or hesitancy of attack is that much more pronounced. This was particularly evident in the shaky start and the unsteady intonation of the final chord in the motet *Hei mihi* of Guerrero. Such strength of tone also gave prominence to the higher soprano notes, which sometimes drowned out the other voices. But the men triumphed in their magnificent depiction of the pains of hell of the Offertorium of Victoria's Requiem Mass. The only other quibble for me was the use of female voices for some, but not all, of the chant intonations in the Requiem. Quite apart from any liturgical questions, the pitch differences did jar a bit.

A lunchtime visit to the foyer of the Royal Festival Hall on 26 February coincided with the unexpected sounds of the Clerks' Group singing Machaut and anonymous contemporaries. These free lunchtime foyer sessions are usually jazz rather than 14th century French troped Glorias. The five singers had to contend with the background hubbub of a noisy bar, a chatty cafeteria and far too many children. [Surely that is the point of such events? CB] But, barely helped by an echoing sound system, they nonetheless managed to hold the attention of an appreciative audience with some beautifully controlled singing. The sight of Edward Wickham trying to explain hockets, isorythmic motets and the Great Schism to the crowds milling around the foyers is one I will remember for a long time.

'The Burgundian Cadence' (Rupert Damerell, Simon Biazeck, Matthew Woolhouse, and Damian O'Keeffe, *cT T T Bar*) was formed in 1996 and focuses on the 14th and 15th century repertoire. Their concert in Kensington's St Mary Abbot's on 3 March was called 'John Dunstable, an Englishman abroad' with John Dunstable forming the link to Dufay and Ockegham. Standing in rather fetching mauve shirts in close formation round a single candlelit manuscript, they opened superbly with Queldryk's isorhythmic Gloria. The alternate verses were tossed back and forth between the two tenors to great effect. The generous acoustic of the church allowed the singers to float their voices without forcing the tone. The countertenor sang well in ensemble without dominating the lower voices, although he was less effective in the more powerful pieces, sounding rather too harmonically edgy in, for example, Dunstable's Sanctus. Pronunciation in the English pieces was of the pre-vowel shift school, but avoided the trap of sounding too bucolic. More performance experience and confidence will help them become a bit less reticent – they looked a bit like naughty schoolboys in Ockegham's suggestive *Petite camusette*.

BYZANTINE FESTIVAL: LONDON

Alexander Lingas

As part of the ongoing six-month celebration of 'Greece in Britain' presented by the Embassy of Greece on the occasion of the British presidency of the European Union, a Byzantine Festival of talks, readings, film and concerts was held at various venues in London from 28 February to 8 March. Subtitled 'A Taste of Byzantium', the laudable aim of this mostly sold-out series was to provide a brief introduction to the rich culture of the Byzantine Empire and its successor states. From a musical perspective, however, the very curious thing about the festival was the near total absence of Byzantine music from its three gala concerts. The first of these musical events was 'The Byzantine Legacy', a programme of Eastern Orthodox choral music sung at the Greek Cathedral of Hagia Sophia on 1 March by the English Chamber Choir under Guy Protheroe, one of the festival's two artistic directors. A pre-concert discussion between Protheroe and composers Ivan Moody and Christos Hatzis raised a number of interesting points about the differences between Byzantine and Western European musical aesthetics. The concert later commenced with its one and only Byzantine chant: a Bulgarian adaptation of a Marian hymn set in Mode III by Theodore Phokaeus, a prominent 19th-century cantor and theorist from Asia Minor who was not credited in the programme. Perhaps this was just as well, for the men of the choir sang this so-called "Bulgarian chant" without the subtle ornaments and microtonal inflections characteristic of Byzantine performing practice, substituting the lusty sound of conservatory-trained Slavic choristers that would serve them so well in the Russian or Russian-style works of the late 19th and 20th centuries that dominated the concert. At all events, subsequent references to the Byzantine musical tradition were either indirect (e.g. John Tavener's *Song for Athene*, which was performed in the presence of the dedicatee's mother) or oblique, as in the excellent new works by Moody and Hatzis, both of which featured Greek texts set to completely original music.

Byzantine music was completely absent from the festival's second concert, an 'East meets West' programme held at St. Paul's in the presence of HRH the Prince of Wales and two Eastern Patriarchs. For the first two-thirds of the evening, the seminary choir of the Syriac Orthodox – i.e. 'Monophysite' or, to use the new politically correct term, 'Henophysite' Patriarchate of Antioch traded off with the choir of St. Paul's. Four soloists from the resident ensemble began the programme with a spirited rendition of Dufay's *Vassilissa, ergo gaude*, written to celebrate the marriage of an Italian princess to a member of the Byzantine imperial family. The Syrians then sang the first of the three short suites of Syriac and Aramaic chants for Holy Week that they contributed to the concert. These hymns and canticles

were, for the most part, relatively simple syllabic or neumatic settings evidently tied closely to their texts, only a few of which were printed in the programme. Particularly enjoyable were the florid injections of its soloists in responsorial chants, which provided tantalising hints of far greater musical riches than the evening's format allowed them to display. Even though they were not professional musicians, the group of sixteen young Syrian men and women generally sang in an expressive and confident manner that left this reviewer wishing that they been allowed to present some longer works. What they did manage to do, however, was to provide an interesting contrast between the approaches to plainsong of contemporary Eastern and Western Christians. Despite the antiquity of their liturgical texts, the Syrians chanted unselfconsciously, whilst the choir of St. Paul's treated the hymn *Veni redemptor gentium* and the 'square' of the Leroy Kyrie as venerable artifacts, a typical Western attitude that was also evident in the music of Jonathan Harvey's *Come Holy Ghost*.

Self-consciousness of another sort was apparent in the world première of John Tavener's *The Last Discourse* for soloists, chorus, and double bass, yet another contribution to the Greece in Britain series by the English composer whose works seem to be its only musical constant. Although effectively written for the musicians and their performance space, substantive use of non-Western material took a back seat to an ideology of primordial simplicity that finds only marginal justification in the living chant traditions of the Eastern Churches.

The final concert was a performance of the Thessalonian ensemble En Chordais at London's Hellenic Centre on 7 March. They were charged by the festival's organisers with the heavy responsibility of representing Byzantine secular culture, a task made particularly daunting by the fact that no notated secular music survives from Byzantium. The young Greek group of five instrumentalists and two vocalists responded to this challenge by assembling a well-rounded programme surveying the survival and transformation of Byzantine secular music in Post-Byzantine contexts. Much of the concert's first half was devoted to Greek folk music, including a number of orally-transmitted songs with texts referring to events from the days of the empire and a rare performance of one of the thirteen earliest notated pieces of Greek secular music which survive in two 17th-century manuscripts on Mount Athos. Rather disappointingly, however, only two of the latter's verses were sung and, despite what the programme said about transcription from only one codex, these had been conflated from the two sources. The Greek-language portion of the programme was rounded out by songs of

Petros Peleponnesios (1777) and Gregory the Protopsaltes (19th cent.), two influential cantors at the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople whose intimate acquaintance with Ottoman court music was clearly reflected in the sophistication of their settings. These works acted as a bridge to the second half of the concert, which consisted mostly of Turkish classical songs by Zacharias Hanentes (1750), one of the many Christian musicians who served the Ottoman sultans. As was also the case with the preceding Greek folk music, the ensemble's committed performance of this repertoire was marred by occasional stylistic lapses of uncharacteristic instrumental figuration. These were exacerbated by their anachronistic use of a violin and a cello to replace the region's native bowed instruments. Despite sensitive playing that rarely crept above pianissimo, the lush tone of Vasilis Vetsos' modern cello was clearly out of place in this music. The last-minute inclusion of a snippet of Byzantine chant by Hanentes was similarly problematic, showing that the group has a ways to go before joining the ranks of scholar-performers like Domna Samiou and Lycourgos Angelopoulos. What was announced with great fanfare as the first modern performance of a vesper hymn turned out to be a somewhat tentative rendition of its first few lines, representing approximately only one fifth of a melismatic setting that would have lasted upwards of twelve minutes if sung in its entirety. Yet this reviewer shouldn't complain too much, for En Chordais had finally provided the first unadulterated piece of Byzantine chant heard in the course of a thoroughly enjoyable (if oddly programmed) 'Byzantine Festival'.

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MONTEVERDI Vorrei baciarti, o Filli

Vorrei baciarti, o Filli,
 Ma non so come, ove il mio bacio scocchi,
 Ne la bocca, o ne gli occhi.
 Cedan le labbra a voi, lumi divini,
 Fidi specchi del core,
 Vive stelle d'amore.
 Ha, pur mi volgo a voi, perle e rubini,
 Tesoro di bellezza,
 Fontana di dolcezza,
 Bocca, honor del bel viso:
 Nasce il pianto da lor, tu m'apri il riso.

Giambattista Marino Rime

Line 2: editions of the poem have *prima* for *come*.

Line 7: *ha* is printed thus four times, though editions all have *ah*. Since the *h* is silent, it does not affect the sound.

The original underlaid text generally has apostrophes at elisions but includes both vowels.

The capitalisation inconsistently given to *Fidi*, *Stelle*, *Rubini* & *Tesoro* is ignored.

Separate copies: £3.00 per set of three. Also available down a fourth for sopranos or less exalted tenors (with some continuo octaves adjusted).

I would like to kiss you, Phyllis,
 but I don't know how or where my lips should strike,
 on your lips or on you eyes.
 Let her lips give way to you, divine lights,
 faithful mirrors of the heart,
 living stars of love!
 Ah! yet I turn to you, pearls and rubies,
 jewel-casket of beauty,
 fountain of sweetness,
 mouth, the glory of her lovely face:
 tears are born from them [eyes], you [mouth] offer me a smile.

Upper voice in Alto book headed *A 2. Voci*

Lower voice in Tenore book headed *A2. Alti*

Basso continuo headed *A Doi Contralti*

Original clefs: C3 for both voices (Malipiero erroneously gives C4 for the lower voice).

Original accidentals are retained except for repeated notes.

ij indications for repetitions of text are expended without note. None are ambiguous; the difference from Malipiero in part II bars 28-30 is printed in full in the original.

Bar 37 part II note 2: misprinted a quaver.

Bar 59 part I: Fs could remain natural.

Bar 104: a *longa* in all parts.

Monteverdi – Vorrei baciarti

A Doi Contralti

8

Vor-rei, vor-rei ba-ciar - ti, o Fil - li, vor-rei, vor-rei ba-ciar - ti,
 Vor-rei, vor-rei ba-ciar - ti, o Fil - li,

10

vor-rei, vor-rei ba-ciar - ti, vor-rei ba - ciar-ti, vor-rei ba - ciar-ti, vor-rei ba - ciar - ti, vor - rei ba - ciar-ti, o
 vor-rei, vor-rei ba-ciar - ti, vor - rei ba - ciar-ti, vor-rei ba - ciar - - ti, vor-rei ba-ciar-ti, o

18

Fil - li,
 Fil - li, ma non so, non so co-me, non so co-me o-ve'l mio ba-cio, o-ve'l mio ba-cio scoc-chi ne la

24

ne la boc - ca, ne-gli oc-chi, ne-gli oc-chi,
 boc - ca o ne-gl'oc - - chi, ne la boc - ca, ne la boc-ca, ne la boc - ca o ne-

30

ne la boc - ca, ne-gli oc-chi, ne-gli oc-chi, ne-gli oc - chi.
 -gl'oc - - chi, ne la boc - ca, ne la boc-ca o ne-gl'oc - chi, ne-gl'oc - chi.

37

lu - mi di - vi - ni, fi - di spec - chi del co - re, lu - mi,
 Ce - dan, ce - dan le lab - bra a voi lu - mi di - vi - ni, fi - di spec - chi del co - re, lu - mi,

44

lu - mi di - vi - ni, fi - di spec - chi del co - re, fi - di spec - chi del co - re,
 lu - mi di - vi - ni, lu - mi, lu - mi di - vi - ni, fi - di spec - chi del co - re, vi - ve

50

vi - ve stel - le d'a - mo - re. Ha! pur mi vol - go a voi, ha!
 stel - - - - le d'a - mo - re. Ha! pur mi vol - go a voi, pur mi vol - go a voi, ha!

57

pur mi vol - go a voi, pur mi vol - go, pur mi vol - go a voi, per - le, per - le e ru - bi - ni, per - le,
 pur mi vol - go a voi, pur mi vol - go, pur mi vol - go a voi, per - le, per - le e ru - bi - ni, per - le, per - le e ru - bi - ni, te -

62

per - le e ru - bi - ni, te - so - ro di bel - lez - za, fon - ta - na di dol - cez - za, per - le, per - le e ru - bi - ni, per - le,
 - so - ro di bel - lez - za, fon - ta - na di dol - cez - za, per - le, per - le e ru - bi - ni, per - le, per - le e ru - bi - ni, per - le,

67

per - le e ru - bi - ni, te - so - ro di bel - lez - za, fon - ta - na di dol - cez - za, boc - ca, boc - ca, boc - ca, boc - ca,
 per - le e ru - bi - ni, te - so - ro di bel - lez - za, fon - ta - na di dol - cez - za, boc - ca, boc - ca, boc - ca, boc - ca, boc - ca

72

boc - ca, boc - - ca, boc - ca ho - nor del bel vi - - - so: na - sce il pian - to da

boc - ca, boc - - ca, boc - ca ho - nor del bel vi - - - so:

80

lor, tu m'a - pri il ri - so, tu m'a - pri il ri - so, tu m'a - pri il ri - - - - so,

na - sce il pian - to da

na - sce il pian - to da lor, na - sce il pian - to da lor, tu m'a - pri il ri - - - so,

lor, na - sce il pian - to da lor, tu m'a - pri il ri - - - so, na - sce il pian - to da

91

tu m'a - pri il ri - so, na - sce il pian - to da lor, tu m'a - pri il ri - so, na - sce il pian - to da

lor, tu m'a - pri il ri - so, tu m'a - pri il ri - so, na - sce il pian - to da lor, tu m'a - pri il ri - so,

96

lor, tu m'a - pri il ri - - - - so, tu m'a - pri il ri - - - - so, tu m'a - pri il

tu m'a - pri il ri - so, tu m'a - pri il ri - - - - so, tu m'a - pri il ri - so,

100

ri - so, tu m'a - pri il ri - so, m'a - pri il ri - - - - so.

tu m'a - pri il ri - so, tu m'a - pri il ri - - - - so.

MAGDEBURG

Brian Clark

I went off on one of my mini musical tours last month. Visiting Magdeburg for a meeting of the Wissenschaftliche Bereit of the Internationale Fasch-Gesellschaft e. V. (for whom I am chairing a committee which is compiling a thematic catalogue of the elder Fasch's compositions, due for publication now in 2000), I was fortunate in that the date coincided with the 14th Telemann Festival in that city and that my friend Matthias was available in Hannover for more sociable purposes.

Like many German cities, Magdeburg sees the sense in promoting its most famous sons. The Centre for Research and Promotion of Telemann's Works is remarkable in housing copies of most of the surviving sources of that most prolific of composers. More than that, it is systematically working through the material and promoting performances and recordings of the best pieces. From September to June there is a concert in the Georg Philipp Telemann Concert Hall within the Kloster Unser Lieben Frauen at 11am on the first Sunday of each month. The highlight of this programme are the Festtage, which this year focussed on Telemann and France. A musicological conference took place on 12-14 March and the city's Telemann Prize was awarded to Hermann Max for his continued championing of the composer's sacred output.

My two firsthand experiences of the Festtage were quite different from one another. I had built up my expectations of Rameau's *Castor & Pollux* somewhat, so it was rather disappointing to discover that the dance company engaged for the production would not, in fact, take part. This resulted in a strange mixture of a concert performance but with minimal backdrops and props, music stands (and scores in hands!) and extended passages of Rameau's lively dances with the performers more or less standing about twiddling thumbs. The performance was framed by a German actor (the only participant in costume) opening with what almost amounted to a music history lesson – at one stage, he said something along the lines of 'It's difficult to know where to start', which the elderly gentleman sitting beside me took as his cue to shout 'The opera might be a good idea', which brought quite a few giggles. Another member of the audience shuffled out after the first half, muttering 'Ist das nicht grausam?' (Isn't that terrible?) he didn't retake his seat for the conclusion.

I have to say that I did find it distracting to have a choir wandering on with music, not really knowing what they were supposed to do (visually) and that when some of the more involved characters turned to engage each other in 'conversation', their voices simply vanished into the wings (they were not miked up, as they would presumably have

been in a fully staged version). Some of the instrumental playing was not really the best either: the fiendishly difficult (and prominent) bassoon parts were sometimes too much for the players.

That said, I found some of the singing absolutely wonderful. Cassandra Hoffmann as Phébé was extremely engaging, her trio with Anne Monoyios (who was stunning in 'Tristes apprêts') and Patrick Ringal-Daxhelet was very moving; Dorothee Mields was an excellent Minerve and Suzie Le Blanc (with some of the most athletic ornamentation I've ever heard in this repertoire) was compelling. The choir, too, excelled in Rameau's sometimes demanding choruses: if their 'acting' left a lot to be desired, their sound, both in terms of balance and tone quality, was a constant joy, nowhere more so than in the offstage chorus.

The next day I heard the Rheinische Kantorei and Das Kleine Konzert under Hermann Max performing Telemann's 1746 St Matthew Passion (called *The French* because the time signature varies in extended passages of recitative as it does in French opera to accommodate the proper stresses of the text: this, to me, is a typical musicological observation – in performance, one was blissfully unaware of any such subtleties). This was an almost total sell-out, as far as I could see (so much so that someone had actually pinched my seat and steadfastly refused to move!) and rightly so, it turned out: the singing and playing were beautiful. For me, pride of place goes to Veronika Winter, a soprano with wonderful control of long notes, an enviable agility in passagework and a matching imagination in the ornamentation of repeats. The chorus (and the solo passages supplied by members of the choir) were first class: I must say that, in contrast to the opera the night before, there was never any doubt about the beat from the director: Herr Max is extremely clear.

The final stop of my whistle-stop tour was Hannover, where I visited my friend Matthias Gerchen, a bass who has recently been singing with Cantus Cölln and the ensemble Gradus ad Parnassum. Indeed, he is due to perform the Muffat Mass in Melk with the latter at Whitsun, which should be quite stunning if their recording of the Biber *Missa Alleluja* in the same venue is anything to go by. So three days in Germany and what a lot of music I managed to pack in: aren't those mega-cultural Germans to be envied? Why don't we appreciate the arts more? Can you imagine a concert within the framework of such a major festival given by musicians between 12 and 16, accompanying dancers of the same age group performing period dances in costume? I don't think so. But why not?

RECORD REVIEWS

PLAINSONG

Plain-chant: Cathédrale d'Auxerre, XVIII^e siècle Ensemble Organum, Marcel Pérès Harmonia Mundi Musique d'abord HMA 1901319 ££ 65' 07 rec 1989

I am neither an expert on nor a particular fan of plainchant recordings. I am reluctant to perform it (as CB once found to his dismay at a Christmas concert in Huntingdon), not for religious reasons but because I find it too personal an idiom to engage in chorally. So it comes as rather a pleasant surprise that I enjoyed this disc immensely: as well as the chant, there is some faux-bourdon and some real polyphony, which is 'improvised' (my quotes, as the booklet does not make it absolutely clear how much was prepared in advance) according to the practices still present in Corsican churches from a mixed ensemble of men and women. Thoroughly enjoyable and recommended. BC

Kyrie eleison Vox silentii 58' 51" VOXSI00001

This contains chant sung in a non-liturgical grouping of texts using settings of the *Kyrie* as a departure point. The ensemble of four women stands comparison with the more famous anonymous quartet remarkably well; technically they are slightly less secure but in other respects far more interesting. They sometimes choose tempi that are better for securing a spacious and resonant sound than conveying the texts, suiting the cathedral ambience, though that brings with it some background noise. But this lacks the lavish documentation which *Harmonia Mundi* gives Anonymous Four. No information is given on sources, apart from the *Graduale triplex*, which doesn't include any polyphony. *Antifoni* may be a suitable Finnish word to describe the *Kyrie*, but it means something else in its English or Latin form – and printing just 'Lord have mercy' might be considered heretical. CB

MEDIEVAL

Fallen Women: Women as Composers and Performers of Medieval Chant Sarband & Osnabrücker Jugendchor 67' 32" Jaro 4210-2

This mixes a variety of Eastern Mediterranean chant with four songs by Hildegard and pieces from the Las Huelgas manuscript. The title comes from a troparion about Mary Magdalene and the repertoire is sacred, not a selection of songs from medieval brothels. I doubt whether there is anything essential in common in music by women from such different cultures, so I'm not sure that the intention to illuminate Hildegard by revealing parallels and analogies is effective. It is very difficult in cross-cultural performances by a single ensemble to distinguish

similarities in performance style from more fundamental relationships. It also begs the question whether the nuns of Las Huelgas actually composed their own music. I was amused to note that *Victimae pascali laudes* corresponded much more closely to what I had written out in the mid-1960s than to Gordon Anderson's CMM version (which I suppose had to be mensural to be included in the series). I'm suspicious of many of the performances here, especially the choral ones, but am nevertheless impressed by an enjoyable and stimulating disc. CB

15th CENTURY

Binchois Mon souverain desir: chansons Ensemble Gilles Binchois, Dominique Vellard Virgin Veritas 7243 5 45285 2 1 69' 27"

A whole disc, with 17 of Binchois's songs, is indeed a treat. The performers do not resist the temptation to wallow a little in the beauty of the melodies: the feeling of time standing still, so appropriate for these songs, needs just the right amount of motion. Also, the refinement of the music is at times spoilt by intrusive percussion. Otherwise, the mixed solo voice and instruments scorings mostly work, especially since Binchois wrote basically accompanied songs. Just three voices are used for some tracks; fine in principle, but in practice not quite as convincing as they should be. CB

Dufay, Binchois Beauté parfaite: L'automne du Moyen Age: Chansons des XIV^e et XV^e siècles Alla Francesca 68' 12" Opus 111 OPS 30-173

Music by Anthonello de Caserta, Binchois, Dufay, Fontaine, Grenon, Legrant, Libert, Paulet, Solage, Vaillant & anon.

There is some overlap between the Ensemble Gilles Binchois and Alla Francesca, with Emmanuel Bonnardot (voice and vielle) and Pierre Hamon (flutes) on both discs. The performances here are a little more forward-moving. The music is more varied, going back to the complicated late-14th century repertoire. The onomatopoeia of the bird imitations in Vaillant's *Par maintes fois* is far less exciting on recorders (even though wittily played) than sung, and the contrast in pitch, tempo and scoring (voices only) with Solage's *Fumeux* is exaggerated; it has been sung better in tune. This is an attractive anthology, performed with spirit, and perhaps a better buy for the newcomer than the more refined Binchois disc. CB

Obrecht Missa Caput, Salve Regin a4 & a6 Oxford Camerata, Jeremy Summerly 69' 12" Naxos 8.553210 £

In my experience only a tiny number of the Naxos Early Music series have proved disappointing; some few are merely satisfactory, but most are very impressive indeed. Happily the present disc comes into

the last category. This is not easy music to sing, with long-breathed phrases, frequent low thirds to tune and balance, and some frankly rather eccentric part-movement. In this performance a couple of untidy corners, for which Obrecht must take at least a share of the blame, are more than offset by sections of great brilliance, such as the sparkling full-choir rendition of the rhythmically intricate 'Domine Deus' episode of the Gloria. Here and elsewhere, the singers do full justice to Obrecht's quirky and ever-inventive idiom, with a constant sense of forward momentum and with passages of highly charged emotion. Rob Wegman's programme note is admirably succinct, relating the now familiar story of the 'headhunt' for the Caput motif and also effectively setting the stage for the performers. D. James Ross

Alta danza: Dance Music from 15th-century Italy Les Haulz et les Bas, Véronique Daniels Christophorus CHR 77208 79' 24"

Another exciting disc from the group that has created for us the 15th-century loud wind ensemble, inventing the music as well as playing it with such panache. The quantity of sources that survive for 15th century Italian dance is really quite amazing and the MSS include plenty of melodies; the problem is knowing what to do with them. Les Haulz et les Bas have worked with a dance expert, Véronique Daniels, and have edited, composed and improvised plausible attempts at fleshing the bare melodies into real music. It would be too much to expect dance experts to agree that this is how it was done, but it sounds more convincing than anything else I have heard. Some will find nearly 80 minutes of mostly loud dance music excessive; but this is an important disc as well as, in short bursts, an enjoyable one. The notes are generous and thorough. CB

Vous ou la mort: Cantiones clamencas de amor cortés en el siglo XV Erik van Nevel dir Cantus C 9607 77' 31"

Agricola, Binchois, Compère, Dufay, Isaac, Josquin, la Rue, Obrecht, Ockeghem, Prioris

This contains 25 chansons taken from the 10-disc set *De Vlaamse Polyfonie* issued by Eufoda and reviewed so enthusiastically by D. James Ross last December (EMR 36, pp. 8-9). I would hesitate to recommend this assembly of the secular pieces too strongly, since if you can, buy the original set and book (which Lindum Records are offering on easy terms). Also, the chansons are not the most recommendable performances on those discs and the concentration of heavily-instrumented songs becomes tiring when they are separated from the predominantly sacred programmes of the full set. This is among a batch of issues from a Spanish label new to me, Cantus; we will review more next month. Like *Glossas* (set up by the same man), they have separate booklets in a slip-case. CB

16th CENTURY

Palestrina *Music for Maundy Thursday*
Musica Contexta, Simon Ravens 59' 33"
Chandos Chaconne CHAN 0617

I should admit to some input into the planning of the music for this CD but not into the recording. The Lamentations, from Haberl's 3rd book for five voices, are among Palestrina's more varied settings, with contrasting textures, especially in the third Lamentation. It is always surprising how restrained Palestrina's settings are in comparison with Victoria or Lassus. The carefully-judged dissonances are therefore all the more telling and the singers here allow the music to take its course in a most satisfying way, creating a beautifully poised and prayerful atmosphere. Voices are very well-blended (something the papal singers took particular care of in choosing singers for Holy Week music), pitch is suitably transposed down and the music is sung by all male voices, with soloists on reduced-voice sections. Speeds are well chosen: slow but with a strong sense of the semibreve tactus. Each lesson is followed by its plainchant responsory from Guidetti's rhythmically notated versions of 1587, overseen by Palestrina; I found this a bit unyielding and it might have worked better a little slower – though we still don't know enough about how Roman chant was performed at the time. Of particular interest are the settings in *falso-bordone* of the Benedictus and Miserere for two and three choirs respectively; music which on paper looks unexciting comes alive in beautiful performances with idiomatic ornamentation, never overdone, and a wonderful sense of line leading inexorably onwards – a strong feature of this recommended recording which does more than justice to Palestrina.

Noel O'Regan

Regnart *Marian Motets* Weser-Renaissance,
Manfred Cordes 71' 43"
cpo 999 507-2

The sleeve-note tells me that 'a colourful instrumentation helps today's listener to grasp the less familiar sounds of the *prima prattica* style in its polyphonic structure'. From experience I would expect a recording starting from that premise to head off in all sorts of directions, perhaps taking us along a few pleasant aural diversions but never arriving anywhere in particular. So much for prejudice: Weser-Renaissance's performance is absolutely sincere and, as with Regnart's music and the recorded sound, quite seductively beautiful. Like the proverbial Irishman asked for directions, I have to say that I would never have started from where Manfred Cordes does, but I would settle for reaching his destination.

Simon Ravens

Canciones y Ensaladas: Chansons et pièces instrumentales du Siècle d'Or Ensemble Clément Janequin, Dominique Visse 57' 42
Harmonia Mundi HMC 901627
Music by Brudieu, Flecha (*La bomba*), Mudarra, Valderabano, Vasquez

This is a fascinating collection of works, a

mixture of Spanish Golden Age songs and ensaladas. Two of Flecha's ensaladas – they're called 'mixed salads' because of the juxtaposition of sacred and secular texts – *La Bomba* and *La Guerra* beg a comparison with programmatic works by Jannequin but seem altogether more workmanlike, lacking the panache and outrageous silliness of Jannequin himself. Here Ensemble Clément Janequin strive to bring out all the drama and humour of falling overboard and battle noises; but there is no need to tip the wink to the listener that it's meant to be funny. This reduces the sincerity of the performance and hence the effectiveness of the humour. There is a remarkable lack of variation in vocal timbre, dynamics and tempo, which would have been very welcome, especially in the strophic Brudieu *Blessings of Our Lady*. Delicate interludes on lute provide relief from a general oral assault, especially from Dominique Visse's strident tones. The relentlessness is all the more obvious because of the closeness of the recorded sound.

Angela Bell

Chansons nouvelles: Parisian chansons and dances c.1530-1550 Virelai 66' 49"
Virgin Veritas 7243 5 45313 2 3
Gervaise, Mouli, Sermisy, Vermont & anon

The recording begins and ends with jolly character pieces by Sermisy, but these are not typical of this selection from Attaignant's publications. Virelai excel at intimacy and there is plenty of that here. Catherine King's clean and agile, slightly wistful voice is not one of great passion, but it fits beautifully with the lute, viols, and William Lyons' gorgeous round-toned recorder, as a singing instrument rather than a soloist – ideal for this repertoire. There is no showing off here, no flamboyance or fuss; simplicity and light abound. Each performance is accurate, sensitive, with apt but not excessive ornamentation and impeccable ensemble. The programme is nicely-constructed, with varied tone-colours and moods holding the casual listener's interest, and groupings of variants of the same tune informing and delighting the more scholarly. The first appearance of the three renaissance viols is a lovely moment, and the spinet and lute solos, by Gary Cooper and Jacob Heringman, are to be treasured for their timing and delicacy, and as little distillations of the styles of the 16th century. Or listen to Gervaise's bransles, settings of some of the best Renaissance pop tunes, which will send you away whistling.

Selene Mills

17th CENTURY

Albacastro *Cantate, Sonate & Concertos* Guy de Mey T, Ensemble 415, Chiara Banchini
Harmonia Mundi Musique d'abord HMA 1905208 ££ 64' 52" rec. 1990

Hands up who knew that Albacastro was Dutch? Well, I was surprised too, and puzzled that our friends in the Netherlands have kept it so quiet – they're normally very good at promoting native talent. The melismata [yes, prime minister, mindful of Ravenscroft, we even use Greek plurals] of

the livelier movements of a cantata set Guy de Mey some problems (he's a light tenor with some lovely high notes), but he's the master of them all. The sonatas and concertos owe a lot to Corelli, but whose of this period don't? This disc, complete with a set of *Folia* variations not on the Hyperion reissue (see p. 18) would make an ideal, unusual present.

BC

Buxtehude *Geistlichen Kantaten* Cantus Cölln, Konrad Junghänel 71' 30"
Harmonia Mundi HMC 901629
Befiehl dem Engel, Fürwahr er trug unsere Krankheit, Gott hilf mir, Herzlich lieb hab ich, Ich suchte des Nachts, Nun danket alle Gott

Cantus Cölln continue their exploration of 17th-century German sacred music with six varied cantatas by Buxtehude. Ranging from four voices, two violins and continuo to five voices, two trumpets, two cornetti and strings and from just over four and a half minutes to over 18, they are as diverse a selection as is conceivable and, in the hands of such expert performers, it is difficult to imagine a more attractive disc. The solo voices blend so perfectly (there are seven in various combinations), the strings (violins, violas, gambas, cello – sometimes joined and sometimes replaced by bassoon – and contrabass) are at times crisply articulate, at others gloriously mellifluous and the brass simply add sparkle to a jewel of an ensemble. Peter Wollny's notes, which are relatively short (presumably to allow for the translations), suggest that Buxtehude's creative powers were to some extent freed because the vocal concertos recorded here were probably written for the *Abendmusiken* and not for inclusion in a formal service. Whatever the source of their inspiration, this is an unmissable recording.

BC

Charpentier *David & Jonathas* Jean-François Gardeil Saul, Dominique Visse *La Pythonesse*, Bernard Deletré *L'Ombre de Samuel/Achis*, Gérard Lesne David, Jean-Paul Fouchécourt Joaël, Monique Zanetti Jonathas, Les Arts Florissants, William Christie. 122' 35"
Harmonia Mundi Musique d'abord HMA 1901289.90 ££ 2 discs in box rec. 1988

David and Jonathas has all the elements of opera except action. There is some wonderfully strong characterisation (Saul in all his fury, David and Jonathan love-duetting in numbers that could easily have been lifted from *Medée*) and an equally astonishing evocation of atmosphere in the music without there needing to be any recourse to dramatic presentation. Originally performed at the Jesuit church in Paris concurrently with a spoken drama *Saul*, which did have action, it stands alongside Charpentier's other masterpiece, *Medée*, in both stature and unquestionable quality. The singing and playing here are both first rate. Even ten years ago Gardeil, Deletré, Lesne, Fouchécourt and Zanetti and the rest of Christie's ensemble had the measure of the piece and give their all in a marvellous realisation of a sumptuous score. If you missed this first time around, don't repeat the mistake!

BC

Corelli Sonate da Chiesa op. 3; Sonate postume
Ensemble Aurora, Enrico Gatti 119' 40"
Arcana A 902 2 discs in a box
Op. 3 + WoO 3 (tpt sonata) & 4-10 (trio sonatas)

The most extraordinary feature of this set is the booklet note: 17 pages in English (more in the verboser French, German and Italian) devoted to a dialogue about the differences between now and then set irrelevantly in New York. It says nothing helpful about the music (most listeners will not have heard of the *Sonate postume*, a miscellaneous group of pieces, not a single set, which Hans Joachim Marx has accepted as genuine and included in vol. 5 of the Collected Works). I'm not convinced by the post-Wagnerian tempi of the slow movements, though the greater relaxation of the quick movements is welcome and there is much to commend these imaginative performances. Arcana has again come up with something that surprises. CB

Hume Captain Humes Poeticall Musicke vol. 1
Les Voix Humaines, Stephen Stubbs, Paul Audet, Réjean Poirier, Francis Colpron, Daniel Taylor 61' 52
Naxos 8.554126 £

Hume Captain Humes Poeticall Musicke vol. 2
Les Voix Humaines, Stephen Stubbs, Paul Audet, Réjean Poirier, Francis Colpron, Daniel Taylor 61' 06
Naxos 8.554127 £

Naxos is to be commended for this excellent pair of discs – it is about time that someone had faith in the music of Tobias Hume. Unreconstructed enthusiasts should buy both discs; they are beautifully played with an imaginative approach to instrumentation (lute duets, tenor viols, recorder and virginals as well as duetting bass viols), some lovely singing from countertenor Daniel Taylor, and some remarkably beautiful music – notably the song *What greater grief* and the viol duet *The Passion for Music*. Hopefully it will find a wider market as well, so that this wonderful repertoire is heard and loved by more than the small world of viol players. Susie Napper and Margaret Little play their bass viols, exchanging them for tenors in a number of pieces, with love, understanding and mellifluous sound (helped perhaps by being tuned down a tone). They are joined by lutenists Stephen Stubbs and 'Paul Audet', whose playing is assured and vigorous. It is a pity that the booklet gives no guidance to the instrumentation of the various tracks. That's a small point for readers of *EMR* but the notes themselves typify the usual academic attitude to Hume – he's important because Dowland mentions him in a preface, and he's original. Why didn't the performers write the notes? This sort of fence-sitting may be essential for the narrow world of scholarship, but it doesn't help a newcomer – and this recording will undoubtedly win new enthusiasts.

Robert Oliver

Il Kapsperger della Musica vol. 1: Musik für Chitarrone, Gesang, Zink und Basso Continuo
Musiche Varie (Suzanne van Os chitarrone, Jennie Cassidy ms, Martin Lubenow kbd, cnt) Musiche Varie CD HK.01 53' 21"

This presents a view of Kapsperger that is more varied than usual, with the chitarrone rarely playing by itself. There is a slight problem with the toccatas and recitative-style song in that it lacks a strong sense of direction; this may well be inherent in the music, but the performers might have tried a little harder to mitigate it. The strophic songs are most attractive, enhanced by fluently-embellished verses for cornet. Jennie Cassidy is always enjoyable to hear, despite an occasional loss of control at the top of a run. The lute playing lacks the feeling of virtuosity that normally characterises recordings of Kapsperger and sounds quite laid-back. I'm not sure if this will sell Kapsperger to the general public, but it is a very pleasing disc. CB

Monteverdi Zefiro torna: Complete duets 1 II
Complesso Barocco, Alan Curtis 67' 51"
Virgin Veritas 7243 5 45293 2 0

My first reaction was that it was odd for a disc of vocal duets to have only the name of the keyboard player on the box. But there are in fact eight singers (as well as three strings and three pluckers), and the success is undoubtedly due to a large extent to Alan Curtis's long experience as scholar and performer in the music of the period. The title piece sets the tone: vigorous but with full attention paid to the words; the voices clear but not inherently beautiful. The performance of the piece that is, coincidentally, edited in this issue is delightful. The pair of sopranos in *Chiome d'oro* are trying too hard to control vibrato, which sometimes slips through, and a harpsichord seems to be playing in the next room. I was irritated by the ornamentation at the opening of *Mentra vaga Angioletta* (I'm tempted to mention Brown & English again.) But overall this is a highly-commendable disc, with marvellous music, much of which, amazingly, is rarely heard. CB

Charming Strephon: a celebration of the life and times of John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester The Consort of Musicke 59' 20
Etcetera KTC 1211
Ackeroyde, Blow, Draghi, Finger, Grabu, Hart, King, Lanier, H & W Lawes, Sandford, Staggs, Weldon

This was produced in connection with the celebration of the 350th anniversary of the birth of John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester. Of the 22 items here, only seven (plus an attribution) are to words by the poet; these are expanded into an attractive selection of mid-century music, stylishly sung by Emma Kirkby, Andrew King and David Thomas. Much of it sounds rather homely when played immediately after the Monteverdi disc (I'm writing my reviews this month in order), but it honours a poet whose status is now probably higher than it has ever been with some very fine singing and provides a good excuse to record a varied anthology of little-known English songs. CB

Early Italian Recorder Music: Sonate, Canzone, Capricci, Ricercate Flanders' Recorder Quartet Vier op'n Rij, Guy de Mey tenor, Guy Penson hpscd, Viola da gamba Consort 66' 26",

Vox temporis VTP CD92 003
Castello, Frescobaldi, G. Gabrieli, Grillo, Guami, Merula, Palestrina, Picchi, Porta, Riccio, Trabaci.

An interesting recording made back in 1991 but distributed in the UK for the first time this year. The Flanders' Recorder Quartet has established a solid reputation in Europe over the past few years, and this is a well-devised programme with plenty of interest. It treads the experimental ground of the early seventeenth century instrumental canzona in Italy, and its subsequent transition to the baroque sonata. The earliest work is the *Ricercar del terzo tuono* by Palestrina(?), whilst Dario Castello is by far the most forward-looking composer, actually using the title *Sonata* for his pieces. Sonata 16 is noticeably in *stil moderno*, and has some exciting, progressive musical effects. The introduction of a viol consort in five double-choir works, and the inclusion of harpsichord continuo, adds a refreshing change of colour in the programme, whilst the *Capriccio (di obbligo di cantare)* by Frescobaldi employs an obbligato tenor voice. In this piece a certain amount of educated guess-work is required, to fit a given ostinato into the quartet texture. This is a good all-round performance, with excellent ensemble playing and faultless tuning. Marie Ritter

LATE BAROQUE

Bach Matthäus-Passion Gerd Türk Evangelist, Geert Smits Christus, Johanette Zomer, Andreas Scholl, Hans Jörg Mammel, Peter Kooy SATB, Nederlands Bachvereniging, Jos van Veldhoven dir 164' 55" 3 discs
Channel Classics CCS 11397

This account, recorded live in March 1996 at the Vredenburg in Utrecht, steers a careful compromise between new approaches (smallish choirs, period instruments and continuous treatment of each subject/theme of attention) and the more traditional, rather evangelically emotional style of treatment, common in Holland and of rather more questionable direct relevance to what we really can be sure about of Bach's own faith and contexts. The strong points throughout are musical, thank goodness, and the performance sounds unusually religiously committed and sincere, though the actual style of religion conveyed struck this hearer as too evangelistic and too little towards what was then Lutheran orthodoxy – but this is partly a matter of personal taste. Certainly that vital phrase 'truly this was the Son of God' stamps the right kind of authority here, and both Evangelist (Gerd Türk) and Christus (Geert Smits) serve Bach's masterpiece very well. Perhaps it is in the interpretations of arias and ariosos that I find the expression too warm, too romantic and too compromised for my own liking. Otherwise, the soloists all sing well and this is a really good, expressively-musical account, indeed, one of the very best. Stephen Daw

Bach Organ Works vol. 7 Ton Koopman (1733-4 Christian Müller organ in Waalse Kerk, Amsterdam) 65' 17"
Teldec Das alte Werk 0630-17647-2

Preludes & Fugues BWV 534, 539, 541, 545, 547 577, 583, 590, 598

Yet another staggeringly good Bach volume from Ton Koopman – and this is one of the best. Some of his earlier volumes have rather overdone the full organ sound, but this is an intelligently made-up programme, full of contrast of mood and colour. Koopman's playing is effervescent and flamboyant. Although organists may object to some of his interpretations, added ornaments, heavy touch and attack, amongst other things, his playing is of such bravado that it cannot fail to appeal to musicians of all sorts. And his choice of organs is impeccable – this is a return to the magnificent Christian Mueller organ of 1733 in Amsterdam's Waalse Kerk. One of Koopman's favourite ornaments is heard at the close of the first fugue (in C major) – he delays the final chord and, in the pause between dominant and tonic, prepares the final chord by sounding the upper tonic note: perhaps it should become known as the 'Koop de grâce'! It is good to hear the C major *Praeludium et Fuga*, BWV 545, with the Sonata Trio movement inserted, although the strident upper voice registration makes the Trio sound more like an accompanied solo. He follows this with the well known, and fiendishly tricky, *Fuga* in G, BWV 577. Normally a vehicle for organists to express their virtuosic skills, Koopman takes it at a surprisingly sensible pace. Not so the D minor *Praeludium* BWV 539, which is bursting with energy, or the final *Praeludium et Fuga* in C, BWV 547, which is played as a veritable paean, the dramatic pauses in the final chords filled with a filigree of joyous figurework. This series is getting better and better. Do buy it.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Bach Harpsichord Concertos vol. 2 [BWV 1053, 1058, 1064, 1065] Robert Woolley, Paul Nicholson, Laurence Cummings, John Toll *hpscds*, The Purcell Quartet 58' 26" *Chandos Chaconne CHAN 0611*

The notion of playing Bach's solo and multiple concertos with so light an ensemble as a string quartet, even with the addition to the bass, is very interesting and comparatively modern. How many string quartets have considered this kind of series? Until about twenty years ago, orchestral forces were commonplace, and only the Leonhardt Consort's recordings began to pave the way. The new perspective, together with careful choice of an appropriate harpsichord, adds up to much more of a soloist's-ear view, which is particularly obvious in the four-harpsichord Vivaldi/Bach concerto. For this recording, some trouble was taken by Mark Ransom, the harpsichord-tamer of London *par excellance*, to trace and assemble four respectable modern copies after the Berlin maker Michael Mietke (d.1719), who is associated with Bach, Köthen and Leopold I. That Bach could ever assemble four instruments by this redoubtable maker seems the opposite of likely or authentic, but nevertheless the sound of four rich yet unFrench instruments proves to be very persuasive in the excellent hands of these

soloists. Also, it is, not surprisingly, the first recording ever made with these instrumental resources. The accompanying notes lean quite heavily on Dr Werner Breig's very interesting studies of the ca. 1738 MS of the solo concertos, which deserves serious attention.

Stephen Daw

Boismortier Six Concertos for Five Flutes, op. 15 The Soloists of Concert Spirituel Naxos 8.553609 £ 49' 34"

Boismortier's opus 15 has long been savoured by flautists as comprising some of the most remarkable and unusual music of its time. These six concertos for five unaccompanied flutes appeared in 1727, when the concerto idiom was just beginning to gain popularity in France. Like both Vivaldi and Telemann, Boismortier delighted in experimenting with unusual instrumental combinations and the result here is exquisite. Within a basically Italian, three-movement concerto framework Boismortier arranges the five flute parts so that the bottom part serves as a (figured) bass, but this often has as much melodic interest as the four upper parts. From time to time all five flutes proclaim thematic material in unison, to startling effect. All the concertos are attractive, but the A major work (no5) is a winner, particularly in the central *Affetuoso* where tiny canonic fragments are gently tossed from part to part over an irresistably simple and insistent accompaniment. Both tuning and ensemble are impeccable in this recording – all five flutes are copies of the same original Rottenburgh (c1725) pitched at A392. The playing is lively and controlled, and overall the sound of five baroque flutes is quite delicious. Definitely worth sampling, at the very least.

Marie Ritter

A facsimile is published by Fuzeau

Eberlin IX Toccat e Fughe per l'Organ Florian Pagitsch (Johann Cyriacus Werner organ, Strassburg, Carinthia) 59' 00" *Dabringhaus & Grimm MDG 320 0767-2*

I wish I could be more positive about this, a very worthy effort from the imaginative MDG stable that just doesn't come off. I am sure that Eberlin was a lovely chap, kind to children and dogs, but when it came to writing fugues he became rather tedious company. To sit through nine of these less than splendid pieces was just too much for me to bear. His Toccatas incorporate far too many mind-numbing sequences, and when these are followed, as they often are, by fugues whose subjects themselves also include sequences, I just felt thankful that the organ keyboard is limited in compass.

Eberlin (1702-62) was a Swabian composer and organist, who worked in Augsburg and Salzburg. Leopold Mozart compared his compositional skill with Scarlatti and Telemann, although I rather side with the other Mozart who complained that his fugues were nothing but versets drawn out in length. Rather than playing on one of the current Salzburg organs, the 1743 organ of St Nikolaus, Strasbourg is used. It sounds as though it is either in equal temperament or is unsympathetically voiced, or both – the

sound is generally on the harsh side. That said, the gentler registrations sound good, the player is clearly good at his craft and most of the pieces would bear an occasional listen. Andrew Benson-Wilson

Handel Aci, Galatea e Polifemo Emma Kirkby *Aci*, Carolyn Watkinson *Galatea*, David Thomas *Polifemo*, London Baroque, Charles Medlam *dir* 106' 10" 2 discs in box *rec 1986* *Harmonia Mundi Musique d'abord HMA 1901253.4 ££*
Disc also includes recorder sonatas in F, C & G HWV 369, 365 & 358 transposed played by Michael Piguet, Charles Medlam & John Toll. rec. 1985

It seems strange that this two-disc set should consist of the 1708 *Serenata Aci, Galatea e Polifemo* along with three sonatas on the recorder, even if the promotional notes on the cover of the box stress the pastoral aspect of the drama. The serenata is an unqualified success, with the three voices taking advantage of Handel's youthful melodic experiments (particularly David Thomas's two-octave leaps) and the players enjoying the exuberance of his instrumental writing. The recorder pieces are also very well played. Michel Piguet's ornaments are wonderful, some of them almost as inventive as Handel! It's a shame the lutenist of the last sonata is not listed as this is an outstanding realisation of the continuo part (solo, unless my ears are deceiving me). There is no mention of the recorder pieces in the notes.

BC

Handel Music for Cannons: 3 Chansons Anthems Brigitte Vinson, Ian Honeyman, Adrian Brand, Jérôme Corréas *STTB*, Ensemble William Byrd, Académie Sainte Cécile, Graham O'Reilly 56' 36" *L'empreinte digitale ED 13072*

O sing unto the Lord HWV 249b, As pants the hart HWV 51b, Let God arise HWV 256a

This is vol. 1 of *Music for Cannons*, presumably covering the set of eleven anthems (with, one hopes, the *Te Deum*) composed in 1717/18 by Handel for James Brydges, Earl of Carnarvon and later Duke of Chandos, and performed at the church of St Lawrence Whitchurch near Edgware. O'Reilly (as his extensive and intelligent notes indicate) takes account of recent research into Brydges' musical establishment in assembling his forces and, in contrast to earlier recordings, uses one voice per part throughout. He does, however, slip into special pleading when claiming historical justification for allocating the *canto* part to a female soprano (he suggests Margarita l'Epine), implying that the part is exceptionally demanding and noting the paucity of treble solos in Handel's Chapel Royal music; but heavy demands on boy singers were made by Handel and his contemporaries, and the allocation of solos in the Chapel Royal anthems may have been influenced by tradition or etiquette. (The possibility that the *canto* line was sung by a few trebles in unison is not considered.) Since the authentic sound of an 18th-century teenage treble is beyond recapture, and as Brigitte Vinson's clear mezzo is highly convincing, no historical justification is needed. The choice of pitch is more questionable.

O'Reilly notes that the 'Cannons anthems are [written] at least a semitone and usually a tone higher than their Chapel Royal equivalents' but says nothing else to justify his low pitch of $a'=392$. The recent restorers of the organ at St Lawrence's are firm in their opinion that its original pitch was almost modern at $a'=433$, and Handel's transpositions would be consistent with that if (as some believe) Chapel Royal pitch was even higher. The sound of O'Reilly's ensemble is thus perhaps darker than Handel expected, and the organ is (for me) a shade too prominent; but nevertheless these are exceptionally fine performances, the power and expressiveness of the music uninhibitedly revealed with perfectly judged tempos. If the voices are on occasions almost drowned by the instruments, that is precisely what Handel's scoring suggests. I am eager to hear the rest of the series. *Anthony Hicks*

Handel Organ Concertos op. 4. Simon Lindley org, Northern Sinfonia, Bradley Creswick Naxos 8.553835 £ 67' 20"

Lindley perhaps favours the flute stop a shade too often, weakening the strength of the melodic line, but generally these are lively and pleasantly robust modern-instrument performances, very acceptable at bargain price. *Anthony Hicks*

Quantz Flötenkonzerte Johannes Walter, Dresdner Kammersolisten 65' 47" Berlin Classics 0020982BC ££ (rec. 1989.) Nos. 161, 187, 109, 132 (QV 5:174, 272, 92, 192)

Three sprightly concertos for Frederick the Great and one from the composer's time with the Electoral orchestra in Dresden are played stylishly by a group of string soloists with continuo and a lyrical, not overly prominent flautist. It is strange that Quantz's copious output is only now beginning to be evaluated by musicologists and players and, if the concertos on this disc are typical of its quality, I look forward to hearing more of it! Recommended. BC

Telemann Les Plaisirs: chamber concertos Sarah Cunningham vdg, Marion Verbruggen rec, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment dir Monica Huggett 73' 39" Harmonia Mundi HMT7907093 ££ Concerto in a rec, vdg, str; Sinfonia in F rec, vdg, str (TWV 50:3); Suite vdg str (55:D6), rec str (55:a2)

This is a re-release by Harmonia Mundi of the identical 1992 recording, now with slightly more arty packaging and trendy lower-case labelling. Featured on the disc is the popular Suite in A minor for recorder and strings, together with three lesser known pieces (curiously none of which I would term 'chamber' works). The Suite in D major for viola da gamba and strings, like its companion work for recorder, features an overture and a series of 'galant' dances in the French style but to which the solo gamba brings a refreshingly different low, majestic timbre. The two instruments are paired with great success as soloists in both the Concerto in A minor and the Sinfonia

in F. Telemann is careful to share the virtuosic display equally in both works, despite the relative brevity of the latter. In fact, this particular work is something of a curiosity since it is originally scored with oboe/cornett and three trombones accompanying the single violin and two viola parts. Disappointingly there is no mention of the extra wind parts in this recording; having heard Peter Holtslag and Mark Caudle with The Parley of Instruments on their 1989 Hyperion disc I must say I prefer the church-like, triumphal effect so produced. Peter Holman suggests that the scoring of this piece and its title *Sinfonia* imply its origin to be from a church cantata, but it does work remarkably well as a concerto in its own right. On the whole, this is a good quality recording with little to dislike; Sarah Cunningham and Marion Verbruggen are well matched soloists, if a little unadventurous, and the string playing is strong and stylish. This is a safe buy, but a lighter touch and a little extra charisma can be found elsewhere. *Marie Ritter*

not list the soloists. RV552 is an unusual work, which I have not previously met, for violin, three echo violins and strings, the soloist and ripieno band echoed by a solo violin accompanied by two other violins. The interest here is in the solo and echo writing rather than the somewhat prosaic ritornelli. (With its slow movement in the unrelated key of B minor, the third movement comes as a jolt). The most interesting work is RV558, for which the AAM has amassed pairs of recorders, chalumeaux, mandolins, theorbos, and a solo cello, with two violins imitating the harmonics of a *tromba marina*, each having their solo spot in the outer movements. Whether the vague familiarity with much of this music on its first hearing combined with the inability to recognise that I had actually rehearsed and played continuo in one of these concertos not 12 months ago reflects the musical competence of the reviewer or the less than distinctive qualities of much of Vivaldi's music is a matter for speculation!

ian Graham-Jones

Vivaldi Ottone in villa Susan Gritton, Monica Groop, Nancy Argenta, Sophie Daneman, Mark Padmore SSSST, Collegium Musicum 90, Richard Hickox 144' 41 2 discs in box Chandos Chaconne CHAN 0614(2)

Another release from the ever-versatile and prolific Richard Hickox, his orchestra, and a starry team of soloists, which may well, like several of its predecessors, prove a model of how to do it. Much recitative is cut (as, indeed, it was for a performance of 1729), though what is left conveys the plot more or less adequately and provides a meaningful dramatic context for the attractive arias. Among these is remarkably little to suggest a composer working to a formula, and one constantly wonders what might happen next. In particular, the quality of the slow music, from a composer more readily associated with jolly allegros, will be a welcome discovery: there is real feeling here (try CD2iii). The singing is uniformly excellent, with tasteful decoration added to the da capos - enough to be effective, not enough to be obtrusive. These musical standards are matched in the booklet, which includes an informative essay, synopsis and libretto/translation. If you have doubts about Vivaldi as a composer of opera, this should convert you. *David Hansall*

Vivaldi Concert for the Prince of Poland Academy of Ancient Music, Andrew Manze Harmonia Mundi HMU 907230 65' 20" RV 149, 180 (op. 8/6), 253 (op. 8/5), 540, 552, 558

This most interesting and varied disc, excitingly played, opens with a Sinfonia for strings with some unusual pizzicato textures in its slow movement. The two solo violin concertos (*Il Tempista di Mare* and *Il Piacere* ops. 8/5 & 6) are virtuoso works, played with flair by (presumably) Andrew Manze. Both have distinctive slow movements and the improvised cadenzas certainly have an individuality that immediately draws the listener's attention. The gentle RV540 is for lute, viola d'amore and strings - it is a pity that the generally instructive booklet does

Vivaldi Le quattro stagioni Elar Kuiv vln, Tallinn Baroque Orchestra 41' 47"

Forte FD 0045/2

I'm puzzled by the desire of ensembles to launch themselves on the wider world with recordings of a work which is already available in so many versions: far better find an interesting, little-recorded repertoire. While the Tallinners were recording this, across the world in Sydney the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra were doing the same, but with the advantage of Libby Wallfisch as soloist and the additional attraction of her brilliant account of the *Grosso Mogul*. The Tallinn soloist is pleasingly sweet-sounding and the performances are stylish. But there are half a dozen equally good performances and without the enticement of a couple of extra unrecorded concertos there is really only curiosity about how early instrument playing is progressing in Estonia to make anyone want to buy this one. It may be different at home, and if this is much cheaper there than Western products, Estonians need not worry that the local product is second-best. The booklet is curious: squashed type is matched by elongated photographs. CB

La Folia: Variations on a Theme The Purcell Quartet, Robert Woolley hpscd 68' 22" Hyperion CDA67035

This contains the *Folia* work featured in each of six discs devoted to C. P. E. Bach, Corelli, Geminiani, Marais, Scarlatti and Vivaldi which were recorded ten years or so ago. If you are a *folia* fan and don't have them, this is highly recommended; but the original format, if more expensive, was more varied. Whichever you prefer, the performances are excellent, even if they don't take full advantage of the excuse to play art music in a popular style that some groups have more recently adopted. CB

££ = midprice £ = around £5.00
Other discs are, as far as we know, full price

CLASSICAL

C. P. E. Bach *The Complete Keyboard Concertos* vol. 6 Miklós Spányi *tangent piano*, Concerto Armonico, Péter Szüts 72' 55" BIS-CD-786
e Wq 15, H.418; g WQ 32, H442; Bb Wq 25, H492

The subtle control and extremely suitable timbre of a copy of a contemporary variation of the fortepiano action and resonance enhancement makes these performances interesting, delightful and full of individual character, even if the three concertos recorded were not all new to the catalogue in these forms. The projected complete series will last some further volumes yet, even without alternative versions, and, as I said of Vol 3 last year, one feels encouraged to subscribe to this really commendable venture. The young Hungarian ensemble Concerto Armonico has a very pleasing directness of attack, which sounds honest even though Emanuel Bach's performances were with far less uniform groups around northern Europe. The scholarship of the booklet notes strikes me as impeccable, and the whole project deserves to make all those involved famous. *Stephen Daw*

C. P. E. Bach *Sonates pour viole de gambe et basse continue* London Baroque (Charles Medlam, William Hunt, Richard Egarr) Harmonia Mundi *Musique d'abord* HMA 1901410 ££ 68' 02" rec 1991 ££ Wq 48/3, 49/1, 66, 136-7 = H, 26, 30, 272, 558-9.

There is something tremendously quirky about CPE Bach's music: whether it's the curious harmonic progressions or the cascading keyboard figurations, it never seems to settle just where one expects. The gamba sonatas are, perhaps, less so than most and, although they do have a confident, individual voice, they were clearly written in the shadow of those of the composer's father. Charles Medlam is an excellent advocate of this music, equally convincing at the range limits and he produces both strident arpeggios and beautiful lyricism effortlessly. The keyboard sonatas are full of gallant mannerisms and pathos (quirky, indeed); in the hands of Richard Egarr (not, as on the front cover, Eggar), they are simply spell-binding. A most welcome re-release. *BC*

Ignacio de Jerusalem Matins for the Virgin of Guadalupe Chanticleer, Chanticleer Sinfonia, Joseph Jennings dir 68' 49" Teldec 3984-21829-2
With music by Giacomo Rust & Manuel de Zumaya

Try playing this to your friends and asking them to guess when and where it comes from. They will probably assume late-18th century Austrian or Italian, certainly not 1764 and Mexico City. The music is fresh and bright, perhaps a little repetitive and tonally unvaried, but contrast comes from a considerable amount of chant. A fascinating issue, excitingly sung and played by Chanticleer and an ensemble including some of the best American players, spoilt only by a designer's folly of a booklet with minimal information on fussy backgrounds. *CB*

van Maldere *Symphoniae* 18, 23, 38, 43 Collegium Instrumentale Brugense, Patrick Piere Eufoda 1206 52' 29"

Yet another of Belgium's well-kept secrets! These four symphonies reveal a composer with an ample melodic gift, an ear for orchestral colour (listen to the rich winds of track 11), a sense of structure which belies his date of birth (1729) and a charm that causes regret at his premature death in 1768. The modern instrument band takes the music at face value (and the notes draw attention to the composer's clear dynamic markings, etc.) and play with spirit and conviction. One of the best recordings of this type I've heard lately. *BC*

'Soler Six Concertos for Two Keyboard Instruments' Anthony Goldstone & Caroline Clemmow *two pianos* 77' 54" Olympia OCD 636

Soler's concertos for two keyboard instruments are sadly not very often heard these days. Their melodic charm and simple harmonic style made them ideal easy listening – delightful but not too challenging. Despite the use of modern pianos, the lovely recorded sound catches a delightful elegance of touch. My particular favourite is the first movement of the only minor key concerto, No. 3, characterised by a stunning cascade of mordents. *Angela Bell*

Trombone Concerti Alain Trudel *trmbn & director*, Northern Sinfonia 53' 07" Naxos 8.553831 £ Albrechtsberger *Concerto in Bb*; M. Haydn in D; L. Mozart in G; Wagenseil in E.

Not the sort of thing one is likely to come upon every day: four early classical concertos for trombone. Well, two concertos and two pieces (the Mozart and Haydn) 'extracted from larger scale musical entertainments'. They all use the high-sounding alto trombone and, in the hands of such a skilled soloist as Canadian Alain Trudel, I have to say that it scarcely sounds like a trombone at all! The music is what might be called easy listening; I particularly enjoyed the three movement Michael Haydn. High novelty value and of undoubtedly interest to trombonists. *BC*

19th CENTURY

Bomtempo Messe de Requiem op. 23 Ana Pusar, Heidi Rieß, Christian Vogel, Hermann Christian Polster SATB, Rundfunkchor Berlin, Rundfunk-Sinfonie-Orchester Berlin, Heinz Rögner 57' 39" (rec. 1983) Berlin Classics 0092452BC ££

João Domingos Bomtempo was something of a wanderer: the son of an Italian, he moved from Lisbon to Paris, London, back to Paris, then back to Portugal... The Requiem, which is largely dominated by the chorus, was written in Paris in 1819 and is performed here by a large chorus and orchestra with an able ensemble of soloists, the last heard at its best in the Benedictus. The choir is good, although there are

occasional lapses in intonation, particularly from the sopranos. An interesting piece and a reasonable performance, nonetheless. *BC*

Schubert Works for Choir and Piano Marietta Zumbült, Sigrid Knollmann, Markus Brutscher SAT, Andreas Staier fp, Norddeutscher Figuralchor, dir. Jörg Straube Thorofon CTH 2358 64' 42" D 232, 439, 442, 706, 757, 826, 836, 892, 920, 942, 985-6

I have spent much of today listening to Markus Brutscher and the male voices of this choir singing *Nachthelle*, a piece I never knew but which I find utterly beguiling. Having been told how nervous the soloist was about singing the high notes, I am happy to put his mind at rest – it is difficult to imagine anyone making anything more of the piece (certainly, a more delicate touch is unimaginable!) The choir has won several competitions and, on this form, it's easy to see why: within and between the sections, the balance is excellent. The soloists have no trouble singing over or through the choral sound and, Andreas Staier is as perfect an accompanist as one could hope for. *BC*

MISCELLANEOUS

Extempore Orlando Consort & Perfect Houseplants 60' 51" Linn CKD 076

I'm puzzled by this, though it explains the curious encore the Orlando Consort gave at Boston in June, just after they recorded this disc. Without a clear tradition, how can four singers improvise? When the band plays, I find the absence of common ground between the two groups disconcerting. The disc begins and ends with hymns; comparison with the second track on the Erato compilation *Vox humana* listed below (*Te lucis ante terminum* in an effective African setting from I Fagiolini's *Simunye* disc: see *EMR* 35 p. 19) is revealing. I find that moving, but the Perfect Orlando just curious. The playing is delicate, but I don't feel any need for it. Perhaps if I were a jazz fan I would feel differently. *CB*

Passion and Reason: the Glossa portraits Glossa GCD920003 71' 20"

18 varied tracks range from the ubiquitous *La manfredina* to bassoon versions of *The Marriage of Figaro*. Such samplers are particularly useful for drawing attention to lesser-known music, and there are some gems here. The booklet mentions the quarterly *Glossa Music Notes* (including a free CD) starting this year, which I'd like to know more about: I failed to find information on Glossa's web site (www.glossamusic.com). *CB*

Vox humana: Voices through Time 57' 17" Erato 3984-20031-2

This is an enterprising assemblage from Erato's vocal discs. If you are offered a copy, take it and play it without looking at the list of pieces: you will be delighted and amazed. But don't buy it: anyone who can issue the Barber *Adagio/Agnus Dei* and fade it away in the middle doesn't deserve your money. *CB*

LETTERS

Dear Clifford,

Having read Anthony Hick's review, 'A *Messiah* for the millenium' in your March issue, I thought you might like to hear of an alternative *Messiah* which I presented in Tiverton as part of my research into *notes inégales*. Over half the movements were performed with unequal semiquavers or quavers and in general the tempi were slower than usual. The 'duet-choruses' were particularly successful - I took 'For unto us' at $\text{J} = 78$ and, the melismas were more rhythmic and shapely than usual. When the violins took over the semiquavers at the choral *tutti*s their semiquavers - now unequal! - had a loose, swinging rhythm, unlike the usual tight sound. 'O thou that telles', at $\text{J} = 135$, turned into a measured sort of minuet and the semiquavers fell apart in a beguiling way. Instead of the usual drive and pace, the music had a relaxed, physical feeling. I would say it was of its period.

If any of the readers wonder where the evidence is for such a departure from the norm, may I refer them to your kind review of my research document in the November 1996 issue of *EMR*

John Birt

Dear Clifford

Writing as your newest subscriber to *EMR*, I hasten to report the first fruits of my belated discovery of this lively and learned publication. The March issue arrived promptly on 28 February, on time for me to spot and attend the 2 March meeting of the British Clavichord Society at the University of Reading.

Proud owner though I am of an Alec Hodson clavichord, which he made for me in 1951, I had remained unaware of the existence of any such thriving Society. It was a splendid afternoon, with Paul Simmonds lecturing on Türk's *Klavierschule*. He demonstrated the particular qualities of four very different clavichords, two of them lovingly recreated by Karin Richter, in music by Türk and by my illustrious namesake E W Wolf, representatives of a group of composers active in the late 18th Century whose clavichord music was eclipsed by competition from the *fortepiano*. It had to await re-discovery and re-assessment until makers like Karin Richter had created authentic copies of instruments of sufficient aesthetic quality to do it justice. After an interval for socialising amongst enthusiasts, Paul taught two of us old-timers techniques for correct touch and articulation in a hands-on workshop session (the Reading music students were notably shy!).

Peter Graham Woolf

Dear Editor

Your views on the relevance of words to phrasing (*EMR* 38, p.40) make sense, but how about their application to viol consort playing? There is a most interesting discussion of the matter by Peter Farrell in the journal of the VdGS of America (XVI, 1979, pp.5-21) which deserves to be better known. The most challenging of his many examples is from Byrd's *Ye Sacred Muses*. The long melisma of nine notes on the syllable *mu-* is reflected exactly in the viol parts. Farrell holds that they should be taken in one bow and not be bowed-out. Would you do so? Even the most skilful, seamless one-bow-to-a-note cannot match the vocal melisma. But observe the corollary; that slurring will be appropriate in many other passages, even solely instru-

mental ones. Rank heresy: all Good Viol Players play One Note to a Bow!

Incidentally, Farrell cites the younger Rognoni (ca. 1620; see last and forthcoming, *VdGS Newsletter*) as showing extended slurings without evidence that they did not apply to viols. Indeed, R states that his *lireggiare* bowings apply to all bowed instruments'.

O dear! what an awkward person I am!

John Catch

Do we want a seamless sound, irrespective of how many notes to a bow? It is, I think, a much more recent assumption that instruments imitate vocal phrasing by their bowing and that phrasing means slurring. Surely Rognoni is describing embellishments. CB

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