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Vibrato is a thorny and controversial subject. Most singers have some colouring to their voice which may be called vibrato and to which very few people take exception. The problem is not so much vibrato in itself but its type and extent. There is a big difference between singing without vibrato and singing with a natural vocal colouring that does no violence to our perception of pitch. The former gives what seems to most Westerners an unnatural harshness to the voice. It may perhaps be appropriate for music of some times and places: we need to experiment. But, at least within our culture, it is an effect, just as rich vibrato is an effect. We need to consider in what contexts what sort of vibrato should be used.

The crucial point to consider is not so much vibrato as intonation. There are delights in hearing the aggressive purity of pythagorean fifths hollered without vibrato. But the gentler Gothic Voices sound is equally effective. More problematic is the intonation of chains of thirds or thirds alternating with seconds that are so characteristic of 18th-century duets. A modicum of vibrato is required to colour and warm the voice, but not to the detriment of hearing the relative pitches of the two voices and their interaction. How often is this missed in current performances? There are two main reasons. One is the size of modern concert halls and opera houses: the acquisition of a big voice seems inextricably linked with the development of a wide pitch-vibrato. The other reason is the inadequacy of education. If all singers were taught to sing in several temperaments, they might be more conscious of the subtleties of tuning. The ubiquitous use of the piano as an accompanying and rehearsal instrument doesn't help.

As for instruments, the rule should surely be to play in a way appropriate for the music. Helge Therkildsen (see p. 28) may be right that modern strings 'are built to tremble'. But it is odd that this characteristic of a modern orchestra developed after most of the music that it plays was written: probably after the Mahler symphonies, *The Rite of Spring*, *The Planets* and perhaps even *Wozzeck* and Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra*. I blame continuously-loud brass and the white-tie syndrome. CB

Books and Music

Clifford Bartlett

MEDIEVAL SOUND

Timothy J. McGee *The Sound of Medieval Song: Ornamentation and Vocal Style according to the Treatises* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. xviii + 196pp, £35.00. ISBN 0 19 816619 2

This is an important book – so important that it has, I gather, ruffled a fair number of academic feathers already. The choice of the word 'song' in the title does not give a very clear idea of what it is about. I think that most of us associate the word with solo, secular vocal music: *Sacred Songs and Solos* definitely needs the adjective. The problem here is that, not only is the repertoire sacred, but much of it involves more than one voice. Despite some attention to polyphony, the subject matter would be more clearly indicated by the words chant or plainsong. Many of us are puzzled about the sound of chant. The Solesmes style sounds inherently 19th-century (I am looking forward to reading Katherine Bergeron's *Decadent Enchantments: the Revival of Gregorian Chant at Solesmes*, which has just arrived). Updatings by scholars working within that tradition have not affected its basic feel, while alternative approaches (e.g. the stimulating recordings of Ensemble Organum) have

not always been convincing. McGee has studied a wide range of theoretical sources from many centuries and has looked afresh at what they say. And that seems to be somewhat different from what they have often been assumed to say. The basic sound differed from place to place, as did ornamentation practice. Currently, chant students are not taught ornamentation at all, as far as I know, and microtonal intervals are only cultivated on the fringes of chant performance. McGee argues that they are part of the core of medieval performance practice, with notation and theorists having a considerable area of agreement. He also suggests continuity with later practice; a comparison of the variety of possible trill intervals with those proposed by Ganassi would, for instance, be worth pursuing.

This book is a sketch for new lines of research rather than a detailed statement of medieval practice. There are obvious weaknesses. It is often necessary to read a whole treatise to understand what a crucial paragraph really means and whether its author know much about his subject or is merely quoting from another time and place. It is frustrating that the Latin of the quotations is not printed side-by-side with the translation, especially when Latin and English terms are not necessarily synonymous (*ductia* and *carol* for instance). How any piece of music is embellished depends on whether it is sung by one or more singers: but this is not systematically addressed. We need to know, for any specific example, whether it is from a solo or tutti section (and whether later chant practice can be assumed to have medieval authority).

This stimulating book should be the spring-board for more detailed studies on the material here opened afresh. New ideas come, not only from new discoveries, but from reinterpretation of old information. McGee has unleashed a field-full of hares (perhaps mixed with a few red herrings), chasing (and distinguishing) which should keep scholars busy for many years.

EMH 16

Early Music History 16: Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Music. Edited by Iain Fenlon. Cambridge UP, 1997 [1998]. vi + 335pp, £55.00.

After several years' gap, we've received a review copy of what is one of the most consistent periodical volumes, with the advantage of a restricted chronological cover: no sociological studies of popular music here. I'm not sure if



the printed order has any significance, but I'll follow it anyway. It begins with Elizabeth Aubrey on the lack of influence from France back to Occitania: 'the southern ethos was barely touched by indigenous northern products or practices, while northern poets and musicians continued to be fascinated by Occitan song and language' (p. 53). Sam Barrett studies the *versus* in BN 1154 and moves in a direction that I am not sure I can follow: I need to read his essay again. The importance of understanding the syntax and meter of complicated texts like those of Dufay's motets, as well as working out what they mean, is stressed in a study of them by our most distinguished interpreter of early texts, Leofranc Holford-Strevens. (Incidentally, because translators have to address the precise meaning of texts, it is important that bibliographies on early vocal music include references to at least those CDs that take such matters seriously.) H. Diack Johnstone describes a volume of three English printed songbooks of the 1650s now in Kraków which also includes a contemporary English MS of 30 songs (19 in Italian, a language the scribe was unfamiliar with, nine in English and one each in Latin and French). The generally refined level is let down by the penultimate item, a Wassail with a three-voice chorus: it is not the Magi who are guided by a star but a group of virgins. Moving back a century and a half, Fiona Kisby presents information on the musical aspects of the household of Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII; she had a musical chapel, and Robert Cooper (Cowper) was, around 1506, her Master of the Children. (One of the two 1598s on p. 216 line 11 is a century out). John Milsom assembles fragments of song publications from London c.1530 and surmises that the casualty rate must have been much higher than was thought, since there seems to have been a market for polyphonic song outside the court.

ATLAS ANTHOLOGY

Allan W. Atlas, editor *Anthology of Renaissance Music* Norton, 1998. ix + 496pp, £26.00 (pb) ISBN 0 393 97170 8

This contains 102 music examples (complete pieces or whole movements from masses, with all of Dufay's *Missa Se la face ay pale*) as a companion to the *Renaissance Music: Music on Western Europe, 1400-1600* by the same author and publisher (see *EMR* 41, pp. 2-3). There is a good quantity of excellent music here, mostly well edited, which should inspire the student to turn his studies into practical music-making, or at least to hunt for recordings: reference is given to a companion discography accessible at <http://www.wwnorton.com/college/music/renmusic>. As a companion to so excellent a book, however, it is a bit of a disappointment, in that the editions are not new but are reproduced direct from previous editions, preserving their variety of editorial policies as well as typography. So visually it is a mess. There are different formats and extraordinarily different degrees of solidity of image, the faintest being Lassus's *La nuit froide et sombre*, one of the few items not ascribed to another source so presumably set specially for the volume. The varying styles of editing can, of course, be used as a

means of discussing the different ways renaissance music has been transcribed, but there are no editorial comments to encourage this. Indeed, the only editorial input is an appendix of translations (in isolation: verse texts at least should have been set out in their original language and verse form as well). I don't know whether it was laziness on the part of the editor or meanness by the publisher that is responsible for such a makeshift volume, but it is a pity. I'm sure that it will be well used; it is good value, a fine anthology for anyone interested in the period, not just students, and there is little that is positively misleading (English music comes off worst). But it could have been so much better. There are no alphabetical indexes, neither of composers nor titles.

PAPAL MUSIC

Papal Music and Musicians in Late Medieval and Renaissance Rome edited by Richard Sherr. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. xxviii + 339pp, £50.00. ISBN 0 19 816417 3

This contains twelve papers from a conference at the Library of Congress on 1-3 April 1993. We start with the papacy in disarray, but by the end we are in the familiar world of Palestrinian counterpoint – familiar, at least, if we have read Jessie Ann Owens's recent *Composers at Work* (see *EMR* 37 p. 2). It is odd that two branches of the same publisher should publish what is fundamentally the same material in two separate publications that must have been in preparation simultaneously. It makes a disappointing end to a varied collection of essays. This is mostly stuff for specialists: not a coherent study of Papal music or musical institutions, just a series of papers on individual topics, all heavily-footnoted (I hope that Oxford's transatlantic department will continue to eschew the more fashionable endnotes). I would have welcomed having the first item, Margaret Bent on Early Papal motets, at hand when listening to the Metronome CD she put together on the subject for the Orlando Consort (MET CD 1008). Two significant early Roman figures are Antonio Zacara da Teramo and Ciconia, both of whom have benefitted from biographical discoveries over the last few years, as, indeed, have Vincenzo and Ninot le Petit. Ninot's chansons were not, Louise Litterick convincingly argues, written by the papal musician Johannes Petit alias Baltazar. The most readable chapter is by the editor on how the papal choir lost and regained its right of self-government in the 1530s: it is gratifying to read that the scheming administrator eventually lost his job. An ongoing topic is how the choir established a repertoire and how slowly it changed. This is almost exclusively a book for specialists; but its content should justify purchase by academic libraries.

BACH RE-READ

The New Bach Reader: a Life of Johann Sebastian Bach in Letters and Documents Edited by Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel; revised and enlarged by Christoph Wolff. Norton, 1998. liv + 551pp, £25.00. ISBN 0 393 04558 7

A new Schmeider last month, a new *Bach Reader* this: what a strain on the pockets of the Bach enthusiast! The shorter BWV may have been an awkward compromise, but there are no such doubts about this longer *Reader*. It could, I suppose, have included translations of everything in the three volumes of *Bach-Dokumente*, but that would have been counterproductive. Everything that matters is here, with references to BD added so that those interested can find the original texts. The book isn't quite as much an expansion as a comparison of size might suggest. The new pages are larger, but have bigger print and wider margins (at least in comparison with the version published by Dent in 1967) so that they contain no more text. The paper of the new volume is also much thicker. This is probably all to the good, provided that it doesn't make too much difference to the price, since serious students are likely to want to annotate the margins. The hundred new documents are mostly minor but nevertheless welcome. The omission that I most regret is that of Bach's wine bill (BD 111), though there is compensation with a picture of an inscribed crystal goblet (p. 313). A new section of illustrations of Bach's autographs is spoilt by the poor quality of the reproduction. Is that the result of cheap production or the declining quality of the originals? If the latter, I hope that the whole Berlin collection has now been preserved in good digital images as an insurance against further decline. There's no need to praise this, merely to congratulate the publisher and Christoph Wolff for refurbishing an old friend.

RODELINDA

Ulrich Etscheit *Händels »Rodelinda«: Libretto-Kompositionen-Rezeption*. Bärenreiter, 1998. 350pp, £25.00. ISBN 3 7618 1404 6

This volume (based on the author's doctoral thesis) is divided into three equal sections discussing (a) the source and development of the text from its historical origins through to Handel's amendments to his chosen libretto, (b) the music (working through the movements by character), and (c) the work's reception by its contemporaries and, more importantly (here at least), by modern audiences, starting with Oskar Hagen's 1920 Göttinger Händel-Renaissance production. At roughly 100 pages per section, it is not a particularly easy read, quoting source material in its original language only (so you need Italian and French, as well as German). The complex discussion of Italian verse forms is somewhat marred by the inclusion of a corrigenda sheet: presumably not even the editors of the book fully understood the subtleties. An interesting list of 20th-century performances notes everything from Swedish and Hungarian translations to William Christie's 1998 Glyndebourne production [whose staging seemed, from the TV showing, to completely undermine the music CB]. Clearly essential for anyone wishing to perform *Rodelinda*, those interested in Handel's setting of Italian (Etscheit shows that the composer was not always the master of the text) or revivalist historians. [Has a novelty-conscious German producer come up with a 1920s-style authentic recreation of Hagen? CB]

Brian Clark

ONE-KEYED FLUTE

Janice Dockendorff *Boland Method for the One-keyed Flute, Baroque and Classical*. University of California Press, 1998. xiii + 228pp, \$24.95. ISBN 0 520 21447 1.

In recent years there has been a noticeable increase in the number of modern flautists at conservatoire level who have turned their interest to period flutes. This clearly laid out and informative manual is aimed at players of the Boehm system flute who have little prior knowledge of 18th-century performance practice, giving clear comparisons between modern and baroque instruments. There are detailed instructions about choosing an instrument and its care and assembly, as well as the obvious sections on fingering, articulation, intonation, trills and tone production. Each chapter is clearly annotated, with basic explanations of many baroque concepts (including the differences between equal and historical temperaments and subsequent implications – an area often misunderstood even by more experienced players) and backed up throughout with examples from original sources, including basic fingering charts and a full facsimile of Lewis Granom's extensive table of trills from his *Plain and Easy Instructions for playing on the German Flute* c.1770. The latter pages are full of studies and exercises (original and modern) designed to introduce the basics of the one-keyed flute in a sensible order, and I am sure teachers and students alike will breathe a huge sigh of relief at the wealth of information gathered together in one volume. It would be fair to suggest that this falls into the 'all the information about the baroque flute you were too afraid to ask' category.

My only small reservations relate to Janice Boland's section on rhythmic hierarchy, in which she gives 'beating time with the foot' somewhat misleading importance, and also to a point of articulation where she advocates the use of the tongue in ending the note – in fact, note endings in general are given surprisingly little attention considering their essential role in the subtleties of baroque flute playing. Of course this book is mainly aimed at the 'beginner', but there is much useful information given about source material (including the author's 'top thirteen' original flute tutors and information about their availability) which will make it a valuable tool for performers and researchers alike.

Marie Ritter

Richard Charteris points out that vol. 2 of his Lupo edition (see last month p. 4) should be dated 1998. More seriously, I failed to spot that he had explained his barring in note 8 preceding the critical commentary. Favouring four-minim bars is primarily a modern device to minimise the effect of barlines when representing unbarred parts. I haven't done a census of 16th and early-17th century scores, but my mental image is of two-minim rather than four-minim bars. Christ Church MS 2 is an exception (and may be the source from which the modern viol world acquired the four-minim habit); but it was copied by Stephen Bing perhaps twenty years later than Egerton 3665. There is no objection to using the normal modern practice, and it doesn't need any lengthy defence. But a major deviation from a major source might have been stated a little more directly. CB

FACSIMILES

John Dowland *Lachrimae*. Performers' Facsimiles (209); £14.50

The Boethius facsimile has been around for nearly 25 years, more recently in paperback, so I suspect that most of those who want it will already own a copy. It is interesting that a different copy is used (from the British Library). I would hesitate to guess without checking the original whether the omission of everything below the lute stave line of No. 10 is the result of a faulty copy or careless production (it only just fits on the Boethius page).

Christopher Simpson *The Division Viol [1659]*. Performers' Facsimiles (215); £21.00

There are two editions of this work, so the date should have been given on the cover. This is the first, in English; the second (1665), with the alternative Graeco-Latin title *Chelys*, is bilingual in Latin and English. That feature may appeal to classically educated Europeans, and it is available more cheaply (King's Music; £10.00). The PF reproduction is larger, which makes reading the music easier. Scholars will need both, but players can choose by price, size or language.

Vivaldi *Concerti RV 94, 95, 101, 105*. Fuzeau (5556); FFR 120,00

Another of Fuzeau's packages of Vivaldi autographs. Unlike the majority of their facsimiles, this is not material to play from; but serious performers have a justified suspicion of existing editions (Musica Rara as well as Ricordi for these works), so the chance to see what Vivaldi actually wrote is most welcome, especially at this price. The introduction draws attention to problems in the notation. All are for recorder, oboe, violin, bassoon & bc, except that RV 95, *La Pastorella*, has the alternative of three violins, cello & bc.

Marin Marais *Pièces de Viol, Troisième Livre, 1711* Fuzeau (5372); FFR 300,00

Essential purchases for viol players interested in the solo repertoire who do not already have the earlier Swiss facsimile. This is not really expensive (a little over £30.00) for two substantial part-books on thick paper. Fuzeau's catalogue claims that Book III has a majority of relatively easy pieces, so perhaps it should be the first one to buy.

Alessandro Scarlatti *VI. Concertos in Seven Parts... [London, c.1740]*. Performers' Facsimiles (173); £37.50

Does anyone know why this set of Corellian-format concerti grossi was published in London fifteen years after the composer's death? Some have been in circulation since quite early this century (Kalmus reprinted some pretty dire scores) and they are certainly worth playing. The customer must choose whether to get this for £37.50 or the King's Music set (which includes two extra bass parts) for £30.00.

F. Couperin *Les Nations* Fuzeau (4894); FFR 350,00

This is five years old, but I have only just realised what a thorough collection of material is contained in the package. As well as the parts of the 1726 edition in parts, you get two MSS of earlier versions: Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon MUS. 129.949 (4 parts) and a score copied by Brossard, Paris BN Vm⁷ 1156, both of which contain three of *Les Nations* under different names as well as *La Steinkerque*; the Lyons parts also include *La Sultane* and *La Superbe*. A superb package: buy while the exchange rate is still favourable.

Shield *Three String Quartets from Op. 3 [Nos. 1-3]*. Merton Music. Score (MM145S) £1.70; parts (MM145) £2.00.

Shield *Three String Trios (1796)*. Merton Music. Score (MM146S), £1.70; parts (MM146) £2.00.

Merton Music is another of Theo Wyatt's projects: many will know his recorder music. Most of its repertoire is too modern for us, comprising 19th century chamber music for strings, chiefly quartets. Quartet players should certainly get a copy of the catalogue. Prices are incredibly low: while not exactly a charity, most commercial considerations (including circulation through the music trade) are avoided. Everything published has been played (I wish I could say that about King's Music: I might have time if I abandoned *EMR*) and individual parts are graded in difficulty, Beethoven op. 18/1 being the yardstick. (Perhaps we could take Corelli op. 6 as an equivalent standard.) The catalogue does not show which items are computer-set, which are facsimiles. The facsimile sample I have (a quartet by Fibich) is reproduced clearly enough, presumably reduced a little to fit an A4 page. It is a pity that the original title-page is not reproduced, or at least details of the publisher. If you are intending to buy a lot of the series, it might be worth investing in a long-arm stapler to avoid the consequences of dropping a pile on the floor or too-vigorous page-turning. The Shield is typeset; the reproduction (on a Copyprinter) is a bit insubstantial, though Theo claims that the method is ten times cheaper than photocopying, so it must help keep the price down to the very cheap rate of 5p per page. The scores are A5, and do have staples. There is a page about Shield supplied by a descendant. The string trios (vln, vla, vlc) are famous chiefly for their movements in 5/4: a set of variations in No. 1 and a *Gioco* in No. 3. In general, they look more imaginative than the quartets, and with the scarcity of trio repertoire, they should be popular. A highly commendable series. I would have had reservations about the market being distorted by publications put out by those who are doing it for pocket-money rather than as their livelihood, except that it is a specific policy of Merton Music not to publish anything that is commercially available. Merton Music, 8 Wilton Grove, London SW19 3QX, tel/fax 0181 540 2708; USA from Meriel Ennik, 811 Seaview Drive, El Cerrito, CA 94530, tel 510 527 6620; e-mail mertonmusic@argonet.co.uk

OPERA

PAPERBACK OPERA

The New Grove® Dictionary of Opera Edited by Stanley Sadie, Managing Editor Christina Bashford. Macmillan, 1998. 4 vols, paperback; £149.00. ISBN 0 333 73432 7

This is a paperback reprint (with a few updatings) of the original publication of 1992. Its relationship to the original *New Grove* is small, entries mostly being entirely new, though bibliographies and work-lists are based on it. It runs to well over 5,000 pages of the larger format of Amerigrove. It has avoided the mistake of the paperback MGG, in that the illustrations are still sharp. The fat volumes have so far shown no signs of falling apart. I've been browsing for the last month or so; since my computer doesn't allow me to do other work while it is printing, it has been useful to fill empty moments while running off a German version of Handel's *Agrippina* for Will Mason at Linz and the parts of Charpentier's *Medée* for Dartington, among other jobs. Out of curiosity, I checked the titles of these and the other operas which we publish. All had individual entries, even *The Dragon of Wantley*, contributed by Peter Holman. Most early English opera, however, is covered by Curtis Price, who wrote the article on the other operatic edition by Peter Holman that we publish, *Cupid and Death*. Anthony Hicks covers Handel. These entries under title concentrate chiefly on plot, and for more general information the reader needs to consult the articles on the composers; bibliographic information is entirely under there. A few excellent articles on individual operas go further than the standard pattern, especially (outside our period) Richard Taruskin's clear expositions of the *Boris Godunov* and *Prince Igor* problems.

I can think of few occasions when I have needed to look up the plot of an opera; in fact, the only time I might have found this useful was when writing the introductory material for the Oxford Choral Classics Opera Chorus volume (instead I used an old edition of Kobbé kindly donated by BC). So is the presence of so many of them what opera-lovers require? Normally when you hear an opera, you are going to an opera house, in which case you buy a programme, or listening to the radio, when the announcer tells you what will happen, or are listening to a recording, so should have a booklet with synopsis, text and translation (unless you have economised with a cheap reissue). So who are these plot summaries for? Their main function would seem to be to make life easier for those who have to provide such summaries. Musicologists would expect to find in an article on an opera information on the sources, performers need to know what modern editions are available and how reliable they are. Librarians would have welcomed information on the whereabouts of performance material and its quality. Opera house managements interested in whether a work might be a candidate for performance with singers on contract need a

rather more precise description of the voices than S mS A T Bar B; a fairly-standard nomenclature for more precise classification of voice-types exists and might have been used. In all these respects, the opera entries are unhelpful.

One basic piece of information is omitted from the bibliographies (and belongs with the entry on the opera, not the composer): accessible editions of libretti in the original language and in English. Mostly, these are available in CD sets. But some are more complete than others, some are more accurately translated. The Dictionary, however, ignores the printed material that is ancillary to recordings. Perhaps it is thought to be ephemeral; but the shelf-life of most books is now quite short as well. CD booklets often contain the most accessible account of a work, as well as text and translation, and may well be the best source of information about it. The Erato *Medée* even has a facsimile of the 1693 libretto. Sometimes lavish programme-books are also informative. Such documents, by no means ephemeral in content, should be collected by libraries and included in bibliographies.

In most other respects, however, the Dictionary offers a wealth of information, good for both checking simple facts and for studying general topics (e.g. *Costume*). I started a list of minor quibbles, but it would be petty to quote it. The degree of anglocentricity shown in the article on Colin Graham (who went to St Louis in 1978 and whose subsequent activity is not worthy of mention) is exceptional. The cover of early opera is exceptionally good, though I must confess that my dippings have chiefly been into later repertoire. There are two good reasons to buy this rather than just use it at a library. It is crammed full with information that you need at hand, and it is fun for occupying the idle moment. But I'm slightly puzzled at its target market, and it seems less useful for the professional working in opera than it might have been.

I wonder what lies behind the ® in the title: is there a parody *New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, perhaps including the full plot of the opera set in a cigarette factory outside Nuremberg? Or is it an attempt to prevent grove becoming a generic term like hoover and xerox, a sign of quality in other, irrelevant dictionaries.

OPERA IN CONTEXT

Opera in Context: Essays on Historical Staging from the Late Renaissance to the Time of Puccini Edited by Mark A. Radice. Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1998. 410pp, £32.50. ISBN 1 57467 032 8

Five of the ten chapters are devoted to 'early' topics, of which I found the last most stimulating: Malcolm S. Cole on the Burg and the Freihaus theatres in Mozart's Vienna.

Here there is enough useful information to throw direct light on the performance of his major theatrical works. Mark W. Stahura on Handel's Haymarket Theatre, with special reference to *Rinaldo*, is a useful summary of the available information. His point that magical transformation was not covered by music (p. 109) supports my comment in the introduction to our edition of *Dioclesian*. The editor really should not have reprinted an article published in the *The Musical Quarterly* back in 1990 on the Dorset Garden Theatre: so much has happened in Purcell research since then. He might at least have corrected his reference to the composition of *Dido and Aeneas* for the school for young gentlewomen from his first page. We may still not be certain where the musicians sat, but there is more recent discussion than Edward Dent (p. 92); there is a strange absence of the name Curtis Price from the endnotes. The chapter by Barbara Coeyman on the Salle des Machines and the Palais Royale theatre seems to be a thorough piece of work, but the initial chapter on the performance of *Il rapimento di Cefalo* in 1600 by Massimo Ossi should, I am told by someone who has studied previous Florentine extravaganzas, be treated with some caution because of a failure to distinguish between propaganda and reality. The whole event was, of course, sheer propaganda, but some accounts exaggerate, while others erroneously describe what was planned to happen. (We have all heard stories of critics who send their reports off to the newspaper without going to the concert and get caught out by a change in programme!) Later chapters discuss *Der Freischütz*, the Salle le Peletier (the Paris Opéra), Verdi and the designer Giuseppe Bertoja, Wagner and *Parsifal* at Bayreuth and Puccini and light. On the whole, I found these more interesting.

ITALIAN BUSINESS

Opera Production and its Resources Edited by Lorenzo Bianconi and Giorgio Pestelli; translated by Lydia G. Cochrane. Chicago UP, 1998. xviii + 440pp, £39.95. ISBN 0 226 47012 1

This is a translation of vol. 4 of *Storia dell'opera Italiana*, published in 1987. It is primarily about the business aspects of opera. Three chapters discuss the production (in the commercial rather than artistic sense of the word) up to 1780, from 1780 to 1880 and from then to the present. Three further chapters are devoted to the librettist, the composer and the singer. I suspect that the original edition was more exciting than this translation, chiefly because this way of considering opera has percolated through a variety of other books and articles in the last decade. It is, however, of great interest and value. Opera is a complicated business, as those who followed the TV exposure of life at the Royal Opera House discovered. Its development cannot be explained just in artistic terms. As with most condensed surveys, reading this is quite hard work, but it is worth the effort. I hope that Chicago UP is intending to translate the other five volumes, but it seems odd that this is packaged as a separate book rather than as vol. 4 of a larger entity: librarians will not be able to shelve them together.

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- Monteverdi: *L'Orfeo* (1607)
- Monteverdi *Il ritorno d'Ulisse* (1740)
- Monteverdi *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (1643)
- Monteverdi *Balli & Combattimento*
- Purcell *Dido & Aeneas* (168?)
- Purcell *Dioclesian* (1690)
- Purcell *King Arthur* (1691)
- Purcell *The Fairy Queen* (1692)
- Purcell *The Indian Queen* (1695)
- Purcell? [?Weldon] *The Tempest* *
- Rossi *Orfeo* (1647)

These are mostly new computer-set editions based on the original sources and available in score and parts. We do not issue vocal scores, which are redundant for music with such simple scoring, but the earlier repertoire is supplied with editorial bass figuring. Scores are for sale; parts of some works are available for sale, of others by negotiation.

* Edition reproduced from a corrected copy of earlier printed material.

¶ Parts are computer-set, but the scores are reproduced from Chrysander; edition not fully checked against the sources.

Also available: *facsimiles of the published vocal scores of various English operas from around 1790, Arne's Artaxerxes (1762) in full score, The Beggar's Opera (1729) & Polly (1729)*

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LONDON MUSIC

Andrew Benson-Wilson

If Sir Thomas Beecham thought that one harpsichord sounded like two skeletons copulating on a tin roof, what would he have made of the skeletal orgy at the Purcell Room on 8 June. With no fewer than 12 harpsichords, 7 players and a four hour running time, it was indeed a Marathon Harpsichord Extravaganza. Devised by David Roblou, Philip Pickett and the artists, the music ranged from Antico (1517) to Mozart (1789), and the instruments from a tiny Flemish quint virginals (after Hemessen's 1583 painting) to a double manual French harpsichord after Taskin (1770). The evening started and finished with Bach's Italian Concerto. All seven players joined forces for the first movement and, just over fours hours later, David Roblou had the unenviable task of playing the Andante (which he did beautifully) under the beady eyes of the six other players, who then all joined in for the final Presto.

The performers seemed more at home in the 17th and 18th century parts of this more-or-less chronological programme, and the playing improved as the evening went on. The first part included Jan Waterfield's fluid and sensitive playing of Sweelinck's *Fantasia chromatica* and a collective jam-session improvisation on *La Bergamasca*. Later highlights were Paul Nicholson and Richard Egarr's playing of Couperin's *Musête de Taverni*, Sharona Joshua's lyrical interpretation of Royer's *L'Aimable*, Gary Cooper's magisterial performance of D'Angelbert, Rob Howarth and Jan Waterfield's concordant duo playing of Jan's neat arrangement of a Biber violin partita and a delightfully farcical cabaret from Richard Egarr. A most entertaining evening, and not just for the harpsichord buffs.

The last of the four concerts in the International Chamber Orchestra season at The Barbican was given on 10 June by the Vienna Concentus Musicus under their conductor, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, in a programme of Mozart and Handel. The highlight was Mozart's *Jupiter* symphony, given a vigorous and punchy performance. The wide dynamic range that Harnoncourt extracted from the players was used with integrity and drive in an interpretation that never lost the broad sweep. I was less happy with Symphony No 25, which opened the concert. The contrast between the strength of the opening flourishes and the gentler interludes was a bit overdone, and four very brassy horns tended to overpower everything. But some lovely oboe playing and the silky sheen of muted strings in the slow movement showed the ability of this fine orchestra to produce a quite superb range of tone colour. The American soprano, Sylvia McNair, demonstrated the importance of stage presence. She swept in, with captivating panache, to sing three Handel arias from *Giulio Cesare*. Her rich, sharp and clear voice was used to bring out the barely concealed

contempt in *Non disperar*, and could even be projected from the rear corner of the stage in *V'adoro pupille*.

Facsimile copies have been used by baroque players for many years, but it is comparatively recently that their use has stretched to live performance of the renaissance vocal repertoire. In their concert of music from the Flemish renaissance at the Wigmore Hall on 12 June, The Clerks' Group, directed by Edward Wickham, gathered around a single choirbook which, for the most part, contained the music in its original notation. This is not as easy as it may sound. Quite apart from dealing in longs and breves and not having bar lines to help find where you are, there may well be no useful word underlay. Having tried it myself, I found the main musical advantage was the ability to see the musical structure of the line unhindered by bar lines. The singers had spent several days before the concert working on the pieces. This might have given the game away, because I imagine much of the music could have been committed to memory (and it also raised the question of the extent to which performers of the day were expected to sight read). But there was no indication of singing by rote. Indeed, there was very strong sense of teamwork. They had to listen and watch each other carefully. This, combined with a tight physical grouping, produced a beautifully concentrated and fluid sound. Members of the audience who hadn't been at the pre-concert talk and demonstration may have been bemused by the hand signals that the singers used to forewarn each other of *musica ficta* – with one finger down for an upcoming flattened note and one finger up for a sharpened one, it was just as well there were no double sharps. The music was Jacobus Barbireau's *Missa Virgo parens Christi* set amongst pieces by Josquin, including two *Salve reginas* and his beautiful lament on the death of Ockeghem, *Nymphes des bois*. The latter contains the delightful epitaph that I can only wish could be carved on my own gravestone: 'Dict, élégant de corps et non point trappé' (learned, handsome in appearance and not at all stout).

The BBC Singers gave another in their Royal Courts of Europe series, *Power and Glory*, at St John's, Smith Square on 19 June. Directed by Stephen Cleobury and accompanied by The London Baroque Soloists, the programme looked at the musical upheaval generated by the return of the Stuart Kings to England in the mid seventeenth century and the reconstitution of the Chapel Royal, with pieces by Blow, Locke, Lawes, Humfrey and Purcell. With all soloists drawn from the choir, the high-[or low-] light has to be Brindley Sherratt's performance of Purcell's *They that go down to the sea in ships*, with its agile and sweeping bass line, spanning a huge vocal range. Written for Purcell's famous bass singer, John Gosling (following the disastrous

maiden voyage of the King's new yacht), this piece contains the best vocal interpretation of a trip on a stormy booze-cruise ferry on the English Channel that I know, with its lurid description of being carried up to heaven and down again to the deep, reeling to and fro and staggering like a drunken man at his wit's end. During the journey, he was well supported by the alto, Penny Vickers. Cleobury used his vast experience of vocal directing to bring out a far more consistent vocal style than was apparent in the last BBC Singers concert I reviewed, although they still suffer somewhat from their wide range of timbres. This is particularly noticeable in the sopranos, which range from boyish vocal clarity to operatic grandeur. Two French-inspired pieces by the bumptious youth, Pelham Humfrey, showed that musical talent and attractiveness of personality do not always go hand in hand.

I so wanted to enjoy Blow's *Venus and Adonis* at the Globe Theatre on 14 June. It was my first visit to the reconstruction of Shakespeare's theatre on London's South Bank, and I thought it might be an idyllic setting to hear England's first surviving opera. But it wasn't. Apart from the obvious problems of open air performance in the drizzle and under a flight path, there was little on the stage to assist in projecting the sound from the performers – and it is not easy for singers to adopt the sort of earthy projection that would no doubt work in a Shakespeare play. Blow's masque is geared towards far more intimate surroundings and it didn't sit happily on the larger stage. In fact, it is intimate in more ways than one. In the first performance, Venus was played by the King's mistress and Cupid by their 9-year-old daughter. The text also contains in-jokes for the courtly audience, including the delightfully-performed spelling lesson in Act 2, when the little Cupids chant 'the insolent, the arrogant, the mer-ce-na-ry, the vain and silly' – those close to the King would know exactly who they meant. The Musicians of the Globe (directed by Philip Pickett) made a valiant attempt at overcoming their difficult surroundings – although protected from the drizzle, their instruments cannot have enjoyed the rigour of the elements. It is impossible to judge the performers fairly, so I won't even attempt it. What the event lacked was a grandeur of performance to match the surroundings. There were only 9 singers, and no supporting chorus, dancers, costumes or other theatrical paraphernalia to add colour and texture to the proceedings – the only prop was a single bench, which was moved around between Acts. The score is full of dances and cues for other on-stage happenings, and it was so frustrating that none of them happened. The director, Ian Caddy, is a baroque gesture and staging expert, but to this non-specialist member of the audience, the gestures and staging appeared stilted. The shepherds and huntsmen (with only the addition of waistcoats to their white shirts and black trousers to differentiate their roles), slid around the stage like mannequins, reminding me of Woody Allen's portrayal of a robotic butler in *Sleeper*. A humorous touch was the perfectly timed above-stage aeroplane that accompanied Venus as she sang 'With solemn pomp let mourning Cupids bear, my soft Adonis through the yielding air.'

THE SPITALFIELDS FESTIVAL

The focus of this year's Spitalfields Festival was on rediscovering the more intimate corners of the 19th-century repertoire, including Wagner, Chopin, Rossini and Fauré. Unfortunately, many of their concerts clashed with the Lufthansa Festival of Baroque Music. One important early music feature was the complete Bach solo violin works played by Monica Hugget over the three Fridays of the Festival. She started on 5 June with the 3rd Partita and the 2nd Sonata. Her interpretations are based on mature and reflective explorations of the musical text rather than the looking for the merely virtuosic possibilities. This was clear from the start, with the well-known *Preludio* from the 3rd Partita – every note was placed, bowed and articulated according to its place in the evolving musical structure. This Partita has a distinctly French feel to it, and this was accentuated by the lyrical phrasing and ornamentation of the remaining movements. This was playing of real musical conviction, and it held the audience spellbound.

Earlier the same evening, Catherine Bott and David Roblou had given a recital of early 17th century Italian music culminating in Barbara Strozzi's beautiful lament: *Lagrime mie* and Carissimi's dramatic and heartfelt lament on Mary, Queen of Scots. Catherine Bott is one of the most effective communicators of musical emotion around – she sings directly to each member of the audience with a depth of expression and an unforced clarity of vocal tone colour that catches and retains the attention. She can focus tenderly on a single word, such as 'dolce' in Caccini's *Amarilli mia bella* or the sweeping 'Lagrime' and the 'staccato l'imprigiono' (as Lydia is locked up) in Strozzi's Lament, or can equally pour out a tumult of feeling over several lines, as in the gruesome torments, tortures, lashings and atrocities that led up to Mary's execution. David Roblou was a sympathetic harpsichord accompanist. His ending of pieces matched the mood of most effectively – the final bass note at the end of Frescobaldi's *Maddalena alla croce* was timed to perfection. In his three solo pieces, Roblou seemed more at home in portraying the vocal fluidity of Peter Philips's keyboard version of *Amarilli* than in the improvisatory style of the Frescobaldi and Rossi Toccatas which, after the opening flourishes, seemed a bit restrained.

I managed to get to two of the Festival's lunchtime concerts. The first was a concert performance of Charpentier's *La descente d'Orphée aux enfers* by the Guildhall School of Music & Drama Early Music Ensemble. This was a reworking of Charpentier's earlier and much smaller scale work, *Orphée descendant aux enfers*, and it bought out far more of the drama of the oft-told tragedy (it was a shame that there wasn't a text or translation for the audience to follow). Charpentier uses contrast of instrumental colour and pitch most effectively to accentuate the drama. This was a most impressive and professional performance, without making any allowances for it being a student group. They sailed through the problems that can bedevil many such performances: intonation was excellent throughout and the

performers had a well-developed sense of stage confidence. It would be invidious to mention individuals in a performance that was so much a group effort, but it is encouraging to see so much young talent.

In collaboration with the Early Music Network, an impressive new Paris-based group The Little Consort (Marie Fuezesséry, recorder, Helena Zemanova, violin, Tormod Dalen, cello, and Véronique Barbot, harpsichord) gave a concert of music by early 16th-century Italian composers and Vivaldi on 23 June. The opening 5 pieces from Falconieri's *Il primo libro di canzone* showed the Spanish influence on Italian music through the Court at Naples, particularly the dramatic *Battalla de Barabas yerno de Satanas*. Helena Zemanova gave a poised and lyrical performance of Bassano's intabulation of *Susanne un jour*. What was billed as Frescobaldi's *Toccata II* (but sounded more like his *Canzona Terza*), was elegantly and stylishly played by Véronique Barbot, harpsichord. She showed the ability (essential for this free-range repertoire) to look beyond the notes to catch the mood of each section of the piece. The whole group combined again for Castello's astonishing *Sonate No 12*, (book 1) – a brilliant performance showing assured technical and musical ability. Two Vivaldi pieces completed the programme, the final *Trio Sonata* being practically a cello concerto and a chance for the continuo cellist to fight back. These gifted youngsters played with an admirable quiet confidence and an impressive technical and musical talent – and it was so good to see their smiles lose that slightly nervous edge as the concert progressed. [But like many young groups, they seem unaware that some members of the audience like the programme to be accurate, and it is easier for the poor note-writer if they provide the concert management with a list of pieces that unambiguously identifies what they intend to play. CB]

The Festival's policy of mixing old and new was typified by the concert on 22 June by the Choir of Clare College and English Voices, Cambridge, directed by Timothy Brown. The main contrast was between 40-part pieces by Giles Swayne and Thomas Tallis, with a Bach cello suite thrown in. This is not the forum to discuss the world premiere of Swayne's *The silent land*, except to say that it is not easy to write or sing in 40 parts. The concluding performance of Tallis's earlier shot at it showed the problems. For *Spem in alium*, voices have to be crystal clear and focussed, with absolutely spot-on intonation. Tallis's motet *In ieiunio et fletu*, using the sonorous sound of the lower choir voices, was the vocal highlight. Raphael Wallfisch eschewed any notion of baroque dance in his expansive and romantic reading of Bach's 5th cello suite.

There appear to be some limits as to how far the authenticity movement is prepared to go. In his introductory note to his *Petite messe solennelle*, Rossini calls for 'Twelve singers of three sexes'. However, as far as I could make out, Combattimento's performance (24 June) contained only the usual two. In most other respects this was a performance that respected Rossini's 1864 original version (and the only

one heard during his lifetime), with twelve singers, two pianos and a harmonium. The pianos were an 8'6" concert grand of 1847 and a 7' foot grand of 1842, both by Erand. The harmonium was by Debain, c1872. The director was David Mason, who also played the first piano part. This a curious work, with a mixture of grand operatic arias and choruses and polyphonic writing. Rossini himself, in the introduction, questions whether it is holy music or damned music, adding: 'God will know that it was opera buffa that I was born for'. The singing tended towards the operatic, which reduced the intimate atmosphere that might have been expected. But accepting the style in which it was performed, the singing ranged from good to most impressive. It was interesting to hear the old instruments; although still capable of a pretty hefty volume, the sound was more controlled and less resonant than a modern grand. But I was not too convinced of the state of the pianos – the larger one, in particular, sported an interesting range of individual resonances on certain notes, and had questionable tuning. The second piano has a very limited role, and I wondered whether it might have been more appropriate for the performance to have been directed from there rather than from the first piano.

LUFTHANSA FESTIVAL OF BAROQUE MUSIC

The excellent Lufthansa Festival of Baroque Music has now reached the stage of maturity when it is ready to leave home (at St James's, Piccadilly), with most of this year's concerts being held at the larger St John's, Smith Square. The theme was the Golden Age of French music from the 17th and 18th centuries, and the opening concert on 1 June by The English Concert and Choir directed by Trevor Pinnock included the first public performance of a new edition by Lionel Sawkins of Rameau's *acte de ballet, Pigmalion*. It is easy to assume that the long established groups must be out of date by now. But the finest of them continually evolve both musically and personally as younger talent is bought in. Hearing The English Concert (in their 25th year) for the first time for a while was a revelation – a lively and vital group of players led by a very up-to-date Trevor Pinnock and with the sparkling talent of Rachel Podger as leader. The superbly-paced and musically revealing *Symphony while the swans come forward* from Purcell's *Fairy Queen* set the standard, with Katharina Spreckelsen's haunting oboe playing a feature of the following 'If love's a sweet passion'. Handel's marvellously theatrical *Larghetto e affectuoso* from the *Concerto grosso Op 6/6* demonstrated the ability of the players to express extremes of light and shade, Rachel Podger's dark and sensuous cadenza being particularly memorable. There was a delightful sense of cohesion between leader and conductor: they seemed to share the direction between them. Amongst the singers, the French haute-contre Jean-Paul Fouchécourt excelled as the statue-loving *Pigmalion*. He is a fine communicator. His singing was spirited, emotional and humorous by turn, particularly in the exuberant final aria *Règne, Amour*, although he was not above the occasional unsteadiness of tone and intonation as he reached the top of his range. Pinnock brought grace

and eloquence to this fascinating music – the suite of dances that the enlivened statue learns from the Three Graces was most effectively interpreted, including the faltering steps of the statue herself as she tries the Sarabande, although the military drum sounded less than bucolic in the *tambourin*.

The Festival had a flying visit home to St James's, Piccadilly on 3 June. The French group Les Talens Lyriques, led from the harpsichord by Christopher Rousset, gave a concert of cantatas by Lully, Montéclair and Rameau and instrumental suites by Couperin and Leclair. Like other things French, this concert improved with age. Their soprano, Karine Deshayes has a most effective voice of impressive dynamic range and capable of the whole gamut of emotions, although it did take a while before she lifted her eyes from the score to sing to the audience. She was particularly powerful in Montéclair's rather violent depiction of Dido's demise. For much of the time, the four instrumentalists seemed to play more as individuals than as a group. Rousset's harpsichord continuo was busy in notes but subdued in volume. The first violinist was something of a character, more comfortable to listen to than to watch, playing with his violin off the shoulder, his head and eyes seemed to roam independently of each other, and of the music, in a rather alarming fashion. When not playing, he had a tendency to wander about. All a bit off-putting.

The French theme continued at St John's, Smith Square on 7 June with The Bottom Line (Paulo Pandolfo and Guido Balestracci, bass viols, Rolf Lislevand, theorbo, and Mitzi Meyerson, harpsichord) and a programme called *Angels and Devils*. It was Le Blanc (1740) who likened the playing of Marais to an Angel and of Forqueray to the Devil (he also suggesting that ladies liked nothing better than two bass viols together). The programme was an attempt to contrast these two styles. The playing reflected extremes, but not necessarily those intended by the composers. Pandolfo wrung every ounce of passion from his bass viol, with playing of almost unbearable emotional intensity and a degree of violence that I have rarely seen meted out to a musical instrument. [Come back, Jay Bernfeld: all is forgiven!] The strength of his bow strokes played havoc with intonation, particularly on the higher notes, and his dynamic stage presence was equally distracting. The harpsichord playing was in similar style, with rhythms percussively punched out with a flamboyant range of physical gestures. Even the theorbo solo (pieces by Robert de Visée) tested the extremes of the dynamic range, from guitar-like twang to the barely audible. It was only Guido Balestracci, in a most effective continuo bass viol role, that concentrated on the production of subtle and beautiful tone.

Back at St James's, Piccadilly on 14 June, Ex Cathedra Choir and Chamber Orchestra (directed by Jeffrey Skidmore) gave a programme largely dedicated to that increasingly revered choral composer, Marc-Antoine Charpentier. The first half was a setting of his *Grand Messe à quatre choeurs*, his only work for such forces. The Mass movements were interspersed by three haunting monophonic settings of hymns

to St Nicasius (beautifully sung by Steven Harrold and Jonathan Gunthorpe), and organ versets by Raison and Lebègue played rather jerkily on an edgy-sounding continuo organ. Although I am not fond of the St John's, Smith Square, organ, it would have given a closer approximation to the rich and colourful sounds of the classical French organ. But at least the role of the organ in such works was recognised. The Mass exposed the wide range of vocal ability and style inevitable in a large non-professional choir like this. The two central choirs, containing most of the soloists, were excellent: the smaller choirs on the right and left wings were not. But they all sounded good when singing together. Soloists were excellent throughout, with Paul Agnew producing a particularly beautiful *haute-contre* voice in Lalande's *De profundis*. He was slightly less effective at the start of Charpentier's memorable setting of Peter's denial – the tessitura was lower, and his occasional sharp hairpin changes of dynamics on a single note obscured the start of the note. But the emotional richness of Agnew's projection and interpretation remained, as ever, outstanding. There were also fine vocal performances by Carolyn Sampson, James Gilchrist and James Mustard, some sensuous continuo viola da gamba playing by Richard Campbell, and stylishly confident direction by Jeffrey Skidmore.

Having had some concerns about a performance last month of Charpentier's *Actéon* and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, it was good to hear another version at St John's, Smith Square on 15 June. This time it was the home team of the St James's Baroque Players and Singers, directed with aplomb by the founder and Musical Director of the Lufthansa Festival, Ivor Bolton. This was an impressive performance, with a particularly earthy interpretation of *Dido and Aeneas*. As foretold in Andrew Pinnock's intelligent programme notes, this attempted to reconstruct the mood of the work before Mr Priest smoothed it out for the sensitivities of his young ladies and their parents. Dido was richly and resonantly portrayed by Katarine Karnéus, and William Dazeley wielded Aeneas's bending spear with gusto. The ubiquitous Paul Agnew appeared (*haute-contre* in a white jacket) as *Actéon* and (tenor in a black jacket) as the gleefully malicious Sorceress in *Dido*. There was a very effective chorus of eight singers (including two male nymphs) and a band that sounded better in its larger format for the Charpentier than in the smaller forces of *Dido*, where the continuo cello sounded rather unyielding.

The French *haute-contre*, Gérard Lesne, made his first appearance at a Lufthansa Festival on 17 June with his group Il Seminario Musicale and a programme based around *ténèbres* by Charpentier and Couperin. The second half included all three of Couperin's *Leçons de ténèbres* interwoven with the three responsaries and preceded by the antiphon and psalm, sonorously chanted by Josep Cabré. In the third (duo) *ténèbre*, the tonal stability of Carlos Mena's *haute-contre* was an effective foil to Lesne's more fluid approach. Lesne's voice was clear and ringing – although there was no audible sense of a break, his vocal tone did change through his range and the upper notes got very close to the counter-

tenor timbre. He was particularly effective in Bassani's *Salve regina*, with the sweeping vocal lines at 'Eia ergo' showing his vocal agility to great effect. In the *ténèbres* he made much of the sinuous melismas which set the Hebrew letters that precede each section, although his wide dynamic range occasionally obscured the articulation of notes. Pascal Monteilhet showed remarkable composure as his solo theorbo performance of Robert de Visée's Suite in e minor was interrupted by what sounded like an alarm clock going off in somebody's bag. I wondered about the use of a bass violin with such small forces – it sounded rather too dominant.

Davitt Moroney gave a recital of harpsichord music by Louis and François Couperin, Lebègue, Marchand and Bach on 21 June at St John's, Smith Square. Moroney is a most effective communicator, musically and verbally. His hypnotically calm style of playing clearly captivated an audience that was already won over by his well-paced (if rather lengthy) introductions to the pieces. He plays as he talks, in a measured, careful and rather restrained manner. The detailed and liquefying flow of his playing doesn't encourage the portrayal of strong feelings – the only moment approaching real emotional passion came in the Chaconne of Louis Couperin's Suite in F. His sense of musical pulse and timing was apparent in the next piece, the moving *Tombeau de Monsieur de Blancrocher* (a tribute to the famous lutenist who died after a post-prandial tumble down the stairs). His playing of Bach's 4th French Suite was rather too Protestant for me – a brandy or two is needed before playing in the French style.

The 6 singers and 6 instrumentalists of Le Concert Spirituel, led by Hervé Niquet, gave a programme of music by Charpentier in honour of the Virgin Mary (25 June at St John's, Smith Square). There was a wide range of musical

and emotional styles, ranging from the exquisite little motet *Omni die dic Maria* to the grandeur of the concluding *Chant joyeux du temps de Pâques 'Alleluia, o filii et filiae'*. The concert was well received by the audience but it never quite took off for me. Although the instrumentalists were effective (and I enjoyed seeing a *teorbino* for the first time), the unsteady intonation of the upper choir voices was unsettling (and was not helped by a vibrato that obscured the pitch of notes and the articulation of ornaments). Their second encore was amusingly apt – the two chords of that typically French cadence, where the upper voices rise to a 4-3 suspension before subsiding onto a trill.

The festival ended with a return flight from France to England. Emma Kirkby was joined by violinist Hiro Kurosake and Lars Ulrik Mortensen, harpsichord, for a concert (at St John's on 29 June) called *A Union of Styles*. The first half included two cantatas by Montéclair and a sonata by Leclair. There was a detour en-route to visit Scarlatti and Handel, but choral works by Greene, Hayes and Daniel Purcell landed us finally on to English soil. I haven't heard Emma Kirkby live for a while, and had heard talk of her voice changing – would I find too much vibrato? Although her hallmark clarity and purity of tone are still much in evidence, she also showed exactly how a good musician can use vocal vibrato as an expressive ornament to colour or shape a note. The most important thing was that her intonation was consistently perfect. Although a queasy stomach prevented her from singing Greene's evocation of a storm at sea, the harpsichordist demonstrated the effects throughout the concert with some extraordinarily animated gyrations at the keyboard. Unfortunately, I cannot admit that it spoilt his playing. The violinist avoided all attempts by Emma Kirkby to get him to look at her, but still managed to be a reasonably sensitive partner. But their instrumental solos were rather too emotionally intense for my liking.

In Memoriam John Barnes, 1928-1998.

Rosalind Halton

John Barnes, one of the most significant figures in the revival of historical keyboard restoration and making, died on 9 March 1998 from a heart complaint that had long affected him. As curator of the Russell Collection of Harpsichords and Clavichords, Edinburgh, from 1968 to 1983, his ideas had a major impact on the subsequent direction taken in many important collections of historical instruments. Together with his wife Sheila, herself a distinguished scholar and practitioner of soundboard decoration, John formed a remarkable team, giving hospitality and friendship to countless keyboard players

and instrument makers of all nations and persuasions. Visitors showing a dangerous intensity of interest in the instruments of the Russell Collection were invited into the Barnes's majestic but comfortable Edinburgh house that was always slightly overfilled with instruments – some already playing, some stored on their sides, all promising adventure to be explored at some point in the future.

With a single article published in *Early Music*, 'Does restoration destroy evidence?' (1981), John transformed – gradually – the attitudes of many involved in early music.

In John's view, it was not the restorer's unchallenged right to set to work on getting instruments – often unique survivals of a particular type – into some sort of playing order to serve the interests of the virtuoso performer. (It was thus a special treat to be invited to play John's original Dulcken, a single-manual instrument of unparalleled grandeur.) The potential damage to an instrument did not justify the exercise, to say nothing of the often permanent loss of information about the original – information that might be understood at some later date if only the traces of work and repairs had remained. To John, the solution was a well-researched drawing of the instrument that could be form a part of the skilful maker's pool of information and inspiration. A fine example of the approach can be seen here in Australia in the instruments of Bill Bright, for whom the experience of drawing instruments in the John Barnes workshop was a major influence.

But there was nothing precious about John's approach. For performer and maker alike, the Russell Collection was one of the few museum collections in Europe where one could really learn about sounds of the past, by playing, watching, listening, measuring. It was here that the player could absorb the sounds and touch of instruments such as the Hubert clavichord, (a favourite of John's) the wonderful sonorous black lacquer French harpsichord (initially catalogued as Taskin, but proved by its decoration and rose to originate from the Goermans workshop), and the nutty little Italian harpsichord with a touch, I thought, that bit your fingers off – no question about using early fingerings with this keyboard, it was the only thing that worked. And there were discussions with a curator infinitely knowledgeable but always on the look out for some new idea, some clue to making sense of the origins of a particular instrument or its decoration, of its fate in the 300-odd years since it had been made, sometimes bubbling over with a radical idea for restoration. Here was truly a laboratory of exploration, shared with unlimited generosity – a virtual, unofficial university of time travel seen through keyboard instruments.

In his later years, the world of the clavichord came to occupy more of John's attention. He was a highly respected and loved member of the British Clavichord Society and a performer who would impart to that instrument not only the delicate nuances but also the unbounded energy that was said to characterise the playing of C.P.E. Bach. I shall never forget the virtuosity of his performance of WTC Bk. 2, Prelude in D major given at his home in which each phrase was chiselled in vivid profile, but building waves of sound that soared. Equally impressed on my memory is the puny sound I immediately afterwards drew from the same clavichord, and the quiet merriment with which John said, 'You'll just have to get one, won't you?' The lesson of the inter-dependence of clavichord and harpsichord, particularly for German music, was one that stayed with me.

If John Barnes transformed the approach and values of harpsichord makers, with his clearly expounded research,

for players his aim was to make beautifully-designed instruments that they could afford to play and own. Surprisingly to many, he did not despise the concept of the kit instrument. He was the first maker to whom Hubert Bédard sent his kit for a French double Taskin design, with the question 'Is it difficult to assemble?' As John told it, he telegrammed his concise reply several years later: 'Yes'. The modifications that John had made in the meantime to keyboard, soundboard, etc. had resulted in a most lovely instrument – one of the finest French double-manuals, completed as long ago as 1973. It knows the 5th Brandenburg, you'll find, he assured me as we prepared to drive it home to Oxford – a transfer of ownership made in characteristically generous spirit, accommodating our far from prosperous circumstances at the time.

Later, John developed a number of kit designs for the Early Music Shop in Bradford, and was especially pleased with the clavichord kit. This instrument, he felt, had the potential to form a sound and musical approach to keyboard playing, as well as introducing valuable principles of construction to the apprentice maker. His last and major kit harpsichord design was based on an instrument by the 18th century Belgian maker Albertus Delin – a design marketed at a fraction of the cost of many instruments. In the field of the Italian harpsichord, too, John made an important contribution with his work on scaling and disposition. The characteristic mixture of passionate absorption in music with a thoroughly logical and scientific approach resulted in John's development of a temperament suited to the performance of Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier, based on statistical analysis of the most commonly occurring triads in the work as a whole. The outcome is a well-balanced temperament that has been installed in an increasing number of organs worldwide.

It is indeed fitting that this man, the key influence for many a maker and player, should have left the world his temperament. The t-shirt motto of the 1984 Edinburgh Harpsichord Festival – I met my maker in Edinburgh – was a source of great amusement to John. He was often heard to observe that his output was small, compared with other makers. The quality of that output has rarely been equalled, let alone surpassed, while the research and restoration that so often took precedence over his making have left an indelible mark. But above all, his legendary delight in sharing ideas, materials, or a meal with friends and colleagues remains a priceless gift and memory.

Seen by Brian Robins in The Daily Telegraph, 9 July 1998

A hush fell across the abbey as Dietrich Bethige, godson of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran minister killed by the Nazis in 1945, sat alone in the centre of the nave and played Sarabande's Cello Suite.

Perhaps Patrice Connelly named her Sydney music shop Saraband after this little-known composer: is he Australian?

G. B. Draghi - Where art thou, God of Dreams!

Where art thou, God of Dreams! for whose soft Chain, The best of Man-kind e-ver do com-

plain; Since they af-fect to be, Thy Cap-tives be-fore Li-ber-ty, Un-kind and dis-o-bli-ging

De - i-ty: He flies from Prin - ces', and from Lo-vers' Eyes, Yet ev'-ry night with the

poor Shep - herd lies, yet ev'-ry night with the poor Shep - herd lies.

Shew thy-self now a God, and take some care Of the Di - stres-sed, In - no-cent, and

28

Fair; To rest, to rest, dis- pose the pi-ty'd Maid, Her Eye lids

5 6 7 6 7 6 6 5 6 5 6 7 6 4 3 5 6 7 6 4 3

b3

32

close, Gen - tly as Eve - ning Dews shut up a

6 6 7 6 6 5 5 6 4 3 5 6 4 3 6 4 7 3

36

Rose: Then bear in si - lent Whi-spers in her Ear, Such plea - sing_ words, as Vir - gins

6 7 6 4 3 6 5 5 6 7 3 6 7 6 4 3 6 5 3

40

1 2

love to hear, as Vir - gins_ love to hear. Then bear in hear.

7 6 6 7 6 6 4 3 5 6 6 6 4 3 5 6

#3

Cremona Festival 1998

Peter De Laurentiis

I ended my review of last year's Cremona Festival saying that despite the faults which the (dis)organization revealed I felt optimistic for this year and invited everyone to come (*EMR* 32). Perhaps I was a little hasty. To the many faults more were added, and the standard of the concerts was, with a few exceptions, not very high. It is sad to start with such sentiments, but I think that Cremona is an ideal place, where an early music festival could turn out to be really successful: a huge music faculty with no less than 15 musicologists teaching about 200 students could provide a competent and enthusiastic management team, and, unlike in other festivals, there are no problems on the financial side.

The first concert I attended was also one of the very best of the whole festival: Handel's *Acis and Galatea* performed by Les Arts Florissants under William Christie. The concert venue was the Ponchielli Theatre which, I always feel, has a very dry acoustic. (I remember a Tölzer concert of Bach Motets where this was particularly evident). But it didn't bother the performers, because they were so confident with the music (the singers knew and sang their parts by heart), probably after much rehearsing. The title roles were taken by Paul Agnew and Sophie Daneman, both very convincing. By coincidence on that very afternoon I had been listening to Gothic Voices' third disc of *The Spirits of England and France* with Agnew singing Binchois. What a metamorphosis! I could hardly recognize his voice: his capability of adjusting to different repertoires is incredible. I was also very taken by the choruses. Without the hindrance of the score they were able to keep perfect time and also to act quite effectively while singing. Congratulations to Adele Eikenes, Andrew Sinclair, François Piolino, David Le Monnier and especially Alan Ewing and his wonderful characterization of Polypheme, and finally to the orchestra: we had singing actors, but also playing actors, with the recorder player ironically sneaking through the singers while taking his solo.

La Venexiana was the old Concerto Italiano without Alessandrini. They performed two Monteverdi programmes on consecutive nights: one sacred (mostly solo motets by Monteverdi and Schütz) and an all-madrigal concert. The secular concert was again in the Ponchielli Theatre. This time I longed for a more spacious acoustic: some of the singers were not in top form (even coughing while the others were singing), and I didn't enjoy the falsettist's uneasiness in his high register. The programme included madrigals from the 4th to the 8th books. I think that La Venexiana's aim is to combine the old Concerto's wit and love for detail with a stricter text-awareness. In other words, they reduce Alessandrini's excesses. But what I have noticed is that, at least in live concerts, when they were

overdoing it I tended to concentrate on their interpretation, whereas now I was concentrating on the voices themselves. And that made me feel uncomfortable (except for the wonderful bass, Daniele Carnovich).

Two days later we had Akademia under Françoise Lasserre performing Schütz: a substantial programme of ten motets from the *Geistliche Chormusik* and the *Kleine Geistliche Konzerte* in the first half and the *Musikalische Exequien* in the second. Glorious performances of gorgeous music. The venue was the fine 14th-century church of Sant' Omobono (Cremona's patron saint). The group's disposition was acoustically ideal: with the concertists at the front standing just under the centre of the dome, then the continuo group, and at the back the ripienists. Among the singers, all very good, special mention must be made of Caroline Pelon, Hervé Lamy, Philippe Roche and Jean-Louis Georgel (STBB).

Monteverdi's 1610 Vespers were performed by Athesis Chorus and Academia de li Musici under Filippo Maria Bressan with the participation of Schola Ergo Cantemus for the plainchant. This concert took place in the beautiful church of Sant' Agostino. Built in 1345 but heavily altered in the sixteenth century, it will soon contain a restored Perugino altar-piece. Last year I was put off by the size of this choir (singing on that occasion Monteverdi motets), but this time the high ceilings plus the fact that I was sitting quite near the back made this aspect less annoying. What didn't quite work was the splitting of the psalms into sections to be divided between the choir and the soloists. The soloists were quite good; curiously the tenors' rendering of *Duo Seraphim* (with the aid of a member of the choir) was much more convincing than *Nigra sum* (taken by Sandro Naglia). I would single out Monica Piccinini, Marinella Pennicchi and Sergio Foresti among the soloists. The Academia de li musici was very persuasive; I could hear the two chitarroni quite clearly (though not much of the baroque harp). *Lauda Jerusalem* and the Magnificat were left untransposed, so that in the latter the violin intonation suffered a little (it had been perfect up till then). The first cornettist, Doron Sherwin, showed great panache even with the high Ds he had to hit in *Deposuit*. Unfortunately his 'echo' was not flawless, but the main problems were on the singers' part: in *Et exsultavit* the two tenors had to reach As (at A=440) with Maletto forced to resort to a pinched falsetto, and Naglia showing his true operatic nature. The choir however sounded less shrill than I had expected.

The following concert, *Orfeo ed Euridice rappresentazione per musica corpo e ombra*, was not a concert. I couldn't say what it was really, but I didn't like it. It started off with a soprano

singing the *Prologo della Musica* from Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (with harpsichord accompaniment). Not exhilarating, but it was over too soon to complain. Then the music-making stopped and a whole series of recordings were put on at ear-splitting volume. I was able to recognize Anthony Rolfe-Johnson in Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, Cecilia Bartoli in Haydn's and Derek Lee Ragin in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*. We also had some Luigi Rossi and Stravinsky. As soon as the listener adjusted to a style, the excerpt came to an end. While all this was happening, on the stage there was some dancing (which I cannot judge), some recitation and lots of shadow puppets and light effects. When all was over in three quarters of an hour, many people thought that it was only the first half, so perhaps they liked it. Before I went to this 'event' I thought that I would have a love or hate reaction. I was quite right.

Although I had heard a programme of madrigals by Giovan Battista Leonetti earlier this year, and wasn't particularly impressed, I quite enjoyed his *Missa La Furtiva* (published in 1617), performed by the Claudio Monteverdi Choir under Bruno Gini. This interesting concert was the result of the musicologist Flavio Arpini's research on Leonetti. Apart from writing the programme notes and providing his edition of the Mass (in the series *Biblioteca Musicale Cremasca*), his knowledge of the subject certainly affected the performance practice, allowing instrumental participation in the Mass (two cornets, four trombones and two portative organs doubling the choir). It was also interesting to hear the Palestrina motet *Surge Illuminare*, passages from which are quoted by Leonetti in his *seconda pratica* Mass. The Coro Claudio Monteverdi di Crema is an unpretentious amateur choir and the instrumental consort was quite persuasive.

For the closing concert we had Eduardo López Banzo with his small group Al Ayre Español performing Spanish baroque music in Sant' Omobono. It is curious that although the Spanish group stood no more than two meters further back than the Akademia soloists, the acoustic was completely different. In the first half of the concert I could hardly tell what was going on, so during the interval I went up the aisle and sat in the second row. Here I got a much

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better definition, but still I wasn't absolutely convinced. The performances were quite enticing (I still haven't bought their recordings with HMD). I particularly appreciated the instrumentalists (especially the archlute/guitar player Mike Fentross) and among the singers, soprano Marta Almajano. The only fault was the excessive use of the castanets.

A general criticism of the performances was the lack of a good falsettist. Every group had at least one, and none was pleasing to listen to. The programme notes were written by musicologists. I know that on some occasions they had to write without knowing exactly what was going to be performed (the information given by the commissioners was very vague and sometimes inaccurate), but despite this the results were extremely good. I found quite laughable the attempt of the organizers to appear more 'original' by indicating in the programmes the source of each piece. The same point was raised by Mr. Bartlett in connection with the Vienna Exhibition (EMR 28 p. 1), and I entirely agree with him. Do I care to know the exact source of a Monteverdi motet when the performers could easily be using Malipiero's edition? (Note that the same sort of information would have been very useful to those who had to write the programme notes, though they would have been satisfied with the correct spelling of the motet titles).

To sum up, this year's Festival was very pale in comparison with last year's, the only concerts with any claim to excellence being Les Arts Florissants and Akademia.

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'This dreamed euphoria' : the Gustav Leonhardt Edition

Robin Bigwood

This package comprises one three-disc boxed set, four two-disc sets and ten single discs in a box entitled Gustav Leonhardt Edition. The number for the set is 3984-21349-2. Items are also available separately under the following numbers. All are Teldec Das Alte Werk prefixed 3984- and suffixed -2. The accompanying ensemble where required is the Leonhardt Consort.

21350 Bach *Concertos BWV 1044, 1053-1065* Frans Brüggen, Marie Leonhardt 212' 25" (3 discs) 1967
 21351 Bach *Goldberg Variations* 47' 41" 1965
 21352 Bach BWV 903, 916, 964, 968/1005, 996 71' 19", 1968/70
 21353 Bach *Violin Sonatas* Lars Frydén 85' 34" (2 discs) 1963
 21354 Bach *Quodlibet, etc* BWV 384, 400, 423, 434, 452, 505, 511, 515a, 524, 690, 691, 823, 895, 899, 925, 927, 929, 937, 940, 952, 939, 992, 1073, 1075, 1077, 1078 Agnes Giebel, Marie Luise Gilles, Bert van t'Hoff, Peter Christoph Runge SATB, Anner Bylsmer vlc 73' 43" 1964-70
 21760 *English Consort & Keyboard Music* (Byrd, Bull, Dowland, Coprario, Farnaby, Gibbons, W. Lawes, Lupo, Morley, Randall, T. Simpson, Tisdale, Tomkins) 127' 22" (2 discs) 1964-71
 21761 *Consort Music* (Biber, Muffat, Rosenmüller, Scheidt, Schmelzer) 77' 40" 1964-69
 21762 *Froberger Keyboard Works* 50' 34" 1970
 21763 *Kuhnau Musicalische Vorstellung einiger biblischer Historien* 110' 48" (2 discs) 1970
 21765 *Mondonville Pièces de clavecin en sonates* Lars Frydén 47' 06" 1966
 21766 *Keyboard Music* (F. Couperin, de Grigny, Poglietti, Rameau & anon) 49' 04" 1962-69
 21767 *Rameau Pièces de clavecin en concerts* Frans Brüggen, Sigiswald Kuijken, Wieland Kuijken 52' 27" 1971
 21768 *Purcell Anthems, Instrumental Music, Songs* Z. 10, 30, 35, 36, 49, 50, 342/4, 369, 632/16, 656, 667, 682, 730, 731, 741, 749, 750, 752, 770, 771, 772, 804, D222 James Bowman, Nigel Rogers, Max van Egmond ATB, Choir of King's College, Cambridge, David Willcocks, Brüggen-Consort 111' 23" (2 discs) 1967-70
 21769 *Keyboard Music* (Bach BWV 539, J. C. Bach op. 5/2, Böhm, Handel Suite 8 in f, Reincken, Scheidemann) 75' 38" 1962-69
 21770 *Harpsichord & Consort Music* (Caccini, Frescobaldi, Marini, D. Scarlatti K.3, 52, 215, 216, Turini) 49' 19" 1962-67

Released to coincide with the 40th anniversary of Teldec's *Das Alte Werk* label, this boxed set of CDs, the Gustav Leonhardt Edition, is based around recordings made in the 1960s and early 1970s. As such, it is a remarkable catalogue of the development of what we now think of as 'period' style, a concept which must have been far harder to pin down, and much less generally understood, at the time. With some of the recordings nearly forty years old they in

no way, of course, represent the performance practice orthodox of, say, even the last decade. But whilst certain aspects appear dated, nearly all the performances here are super-communicative, convincing, and often more satisfying than trendy modern equivalents I've heard.

What struck me most as I listened to the 21 discs in the set was the astonishing consistency of Leonhardt's input – as harpsichordist, organist, director and (on the Kuhnau biblical sonatas disc) narrator – compared to most of the musicians he collaborated with. There is, for example, relatively little to distinguish the playing on the earliest harpsichord recordings in this set from those made, say, in the 80s: Leonhardt seems to have done little more than subtly refine his personal style over the years. In contrast, there is massive variation in string playing styles, and, at times, a rather haphazard use of instruments, especially harpsichords, which range from 17th-century originals to a rather sick-sounding Neupert.

Sadly, though, the greatest inconsistency lies with the recording techniques employed, to the extent that the earlier recordings (which are invariably the poorest quality) sound almost unacceptably dated, regardless of the quality of performance. I always find discs particularly hard to assess in an open-minded way when the sound quality is poor, and here I feel that, despite their historical importance and interest, it might have been more prudent to keep shelved a couple of the recordings from the 60s.

That aside, there are some great things to be discovered in this set. The first CD I listened to, the Bach violin sonatas, with Lars Frydén playing violin, is, in a sense, one of the most intriguing, as well as one of the most enjoyable, of the whole set. Recorded in 1963, Frydén's is a very intense 'modern' violin sound, with fast and constant vibrato and little in the way of *messa di voce*. Both instruments seem to have been recorded with microphones placed very close, and each is assigned, according to what is now an outmoded recording technique, one side of the stereo image. But despite all this, the performances preserved here are absolutely superb, the sonatas being presented with real intelligence and with a proper sense of the interplay between parts, such that neither player is afraid to take a back seat when the music demands it. Frydén's playing is dated, certainly, and especially so in relation to Leonhardt's, which, allied to the Skowroneck Dulcken copy, sounds as if it could have been recorded yesterday. But there is nevertheless a tremendous feeling of unity between the two, and with nothing but the subtlest nuances of articulation large scale musical structures that powerfully elucidate the music are built and sustained.

Inspired by this auspicious start I went straight to the 'Bach, Böhm, Handel, Reincken, Scheidemann keyboard music' disc. The opener, Reincken's *An den Wasserflüssen Babylon* chorale fantasia, recorded in 1967, is superb, and the simple nobility of the Schnitger organ is accurately reproduced. The harpsichord pieces, on the other hand, are less impressive. This stems, first and foremost, from the Gräbner copy by W Rück made 1956-7 which, certainly not helped by the very wobbly 1962 recording, comes over as lifeless, buzzy, and ultimately quite irritating. Having it alongside Böhm's F minor suite no. 8 played on the Skowroneck didn't help its cause either. Leonhardt's playing is good enough still to make the pieces effective, but I feel that given any other alternative these are recordings that no-one will listen to except out of the dryest sense of academic enquiry – which is a shame, and hardly, I think, a testimony worthy of so great a figure as Leonhardt.

I was quite surprised by the use of some rather ropey harpsichords, and can only presume that there was a limited choice for some of the sessions. The 3-CD set of Bach harpsichord concertos (not, unfortunately, a complete survey) is a case in point. Leonhardt uses the Skowroneck for many, and it sounds superb, but there is the improbable and not altogether successful line-up of Skowroneck, Rück after Gräbner (nasty), Kirkmann 1775 (original) and Neupert in the concerto for four harpsichords BWV1065. The Rück keeps cropping up (far too many times for my liking) and another Kirkmann, this one from 1766, is anachronistically used for the *Toccata Undecima* on the Frescobaldi disc, and again, not very successfully, for another Lars Frydén collaboration, in the Mondonville *Pièces de clavecin en sonates* op. 3.

I was also surprised by the extensive use of violins, as opposed to viols, on the English Consort Music disc, especially as the latter are present for the recording of one of the Purcell Fantasias, done one year later. The Purcell discs are actually amongst the most revealing of the set. Having listened recently to some of the lavish and ebullient King's Consort recordings of the anthems, the *Rejoice in the Lord alway* of this two-CD collection of anthems, instrumental music and songs initially sounded restrained, and somewhat severe. But it only took a slight readjustment of my expectations to discover that this, along with all the other pieces on the disc, is a brilliant, compelling reading.

This severity and austerity is a feature of nearly all the recordings, just as it is in the Leonhardt/Harnoncourt Bach Cantatas, but it's something heard less often nowadays. It is certainly more challenging for the listener, but, to my mind, imbues the music with a timeless and subtly-authoritative quality which is hard to resist once it is appreciated. The same could very well be said of Leonhardt's harpsichord playing: fewer gestures are made towards 'easy listening', the performances seeming, sometimes, devoid of emotion; but there is a very convincing sense, for me, at least, that what's going on is 'authentic' in every sense of the word.

The scale of Leonhardt's achievement is conveyed very successfully in the series of biographical sketches by Arnd Richter, one per CD, contained in the booklet notes. Added to this there is a wonderfully poetic and, in the nicest sense, hilarious 'eulogy' by Bob van Asperen, from which the title of this review comes: 'Love of the muse led him beyond the boundaries of the keyboard instrument;... he rediscovered the treasures of the consort repertoire and entrusted this dreamed euphoria to the disc too.' The programme notes for each disc are, mostly, excellent, and the set as a whole is very well presented, with lots of good photographs, for instance, of Leonhardt and his fellow musicians.

One recording in the set really stands out: Rameau's *Pièces de clavecin en concerts*, with Leonhardt on harpsichord, Frans Brüggen playing flute, and Sigiswald and Wieland Kuijken on violin and viola da gamba respectively. This disc, recorded in 1971, doesn't really belong with the others, in the sense that one doesn't have to listen with a feeling for its vintage. Instead, it sounds completely up-to-date, and employs a very different gestural and expressive language to any of the recordings from the 60s. In a way it seems to usher in the 'modern age', where neutrality and austerity, as goals of period performance, are left behind, and individual players begin to develop radically differing personal styles. There is certainly much more confidence here, more ingenuity, and greater musical characterisation. Leonhardt retains, as he does to this day, the cool eloquence that is so much a hallmark of his playing, but there is perhaps more humour and wit than before.

Taking this set as a whole, then, it's quite difficult to give a blanket recommendation, not least because most players and listeners of today would find more affinity, I'm sure, with recordings made more recently. In one of Arnd Richter's articles, entitled 'Early Music is Not a Hobby' Leonhardt is quoted as saying 'In ten years' time ... we may perhaps laugh at what we are doing today, just as there is much that we now do differently, more freely and less dogmatically, than at the beginning of the early music movement.' I feel that this comment has great resonance in relation to the Gustav Leonhardt edition. There certainly is a lack of freedom in many of the performances, and it's easy to quibble with some aspects of style, interpretation and instrumentation. But underlying everything is superb musicianship, and a courageous avoidance of arrogance and complacency that is not always found in modern, more 'correct' performances and recordings.

The Gustav Leonhardt edition documents a golden age of early music research and performance from which all players today have ultimately derived their style, and from which many of our most deeply-held convictions about how early music should sound have descended. I only wish, though, that some later recordings had been included too – this really would have put the achievements of the pioneering years into perspective.

RECORD REVIEWS

MEDIEVAL

Ars Subtilior New London Consort, Philip Pickett 68' 27"

Linn CKD 039

Music by Bartololino de Padua, Borlet, Cuvelier, Grenon, Grimace, Hasprois, Matheus de Perusia, Philipotus de Caserta, Philippe de Moulins, Vaillant, Velut & anon

En doulz chastel de Pavi: Chansons à la cour des Visconti vers 1400 Ferrara Ensemble, Crawford Young 60' 35"

Harmonia Mundi France HMC 905241

The virtuosic French secular music of the post-Machaut period used to sound so painful when I first encountered it in the 1960s, but both these discs show, in very different ways, that it really does work as music. Crawford Young's group is extremely laid back; at times one almost feels that, in complex passages, the parts are doing their own thing and any relationship between them is casual; they avoid strong rhythmic emphasis and are in no hurry. The virtuosity of singing and playing is, at least in the vocal pieces, subtly concealed, so all the more effective. Four instrumental pieces are played in a more extrovert way. The New London Consort sounds more organised and has a brighter approach, with a soprano as its sole singer (Kate Bott, ideal in this music) and a prominent recorder. In the one piece in common, *En remirant*, the two performances feel quite similar, despite different sounds and NLC's taking a minute less. Neither group have adopted the Pagean heresy, but instrumental playing is now so much more subtle than it used to be. The NLC offers a broad anthology of the repertoire while the Ferrara Ensemble concentrates on music that can be connected with the Visconti family. Both are recommended; if you are new to this music, try NLC, but if you want a more focussed repertoire, don't hesitate to buy the Ferrara Ensemble. CB

The Fire and the Rose: Aquitanian Chant & Polyphony Heliotrope 61' 36"

Koch 3-7356-2

The front of the box omits the words '& Polyphony': presumably chant still sells better. But the list of performers (4 singers, 5 players – though only the singers are deemed worthy of photographs) hardly leads one to expect plainsong and most of music on the disc is either polyphonic, or not part of the basic chant repertoire and not performed like chant. I am not sure on what sort of occasions church music would have been performed with instruments in 12th-century Aquitania. Would vielles have been allowed to improvise on *Victime paschali laudes* at the Easter Mass? That apart, this brings music that can look rather aimless on the page completely to life, with highly-effective and moving singing. If you get a chance to sample it, try the last track, the

Christmas *Plebs Domini* with its haunting refrain *Mariam vox, Mariam cor*; it will help you decide whether you find the instruments a positive addition or an annoyance. CB

15th CENTURY

Ockeghem Missa prolationum, Marian Motets The Hilliard Ensemble 67' 47" rec 1988
Virgin Veritas 7243 5 61484 2 0
Alma Redemptoris mater, Ave Maria, Intemerata Dei mater, Salve Regina I & II

I am surprised how well this stands almost a decade after it was recorded. Originally released on Reflexe, it is one of a number of vintage Hilliard releases from the 80s which changed the face of early music recording. The singing is beautifully phrased and generally well tuned, and all the voices are in their prime, although the more animated sections of the Mass lack the rhythmical precision and defining edge of later recordings. It was interesting to compare this performance with the *Agnus Dei* of the same mass recorded in 1997 and released on the Hilliard Live label. While the recording quality is slightly better on the latter, the approach is extraordinarily consistent. The Marian motets are on the whole more engaging musically than the Mass and also expressively sung. Incidentally, I note to my own amazement that I now possess five recordings of this Mass, when once upon a time a single adequate rendition would have been counted a bonus! D. James Ross

16th CENTURY

Lassus Profane motetten see below p. 26

Woltz Nova Musices Organice Tabulatur: Die Orgeltablatur von Johann Woltz Bernd Schleyer cmt, Martin Lubenow org 52' 55"
Cornetto CORN-30-1-004

This demonstrates (if that is not too clinical a word) several aspects of music around 1600. First, a fine organ built in 1619 by Edo Evers at the Warnfried-Kirche at Osteel. With two manuals and 13 stops (excluding the later pedal additions) it is perhaps a bit big for the domestic parts of the repertoire, or does the mixture of secular and sacred in some of the sources really mean that organists might embellish *Susanne ung jour* or *Vestivi i colli* within the liturgy? Most of the diminution here comes from the cornett, brilliantly played. It is nice to have the accompaniment on an instrument of substance. There are also organ solos of repertoire that Cornetto-Verlag has published recently: *Fugae* by Simon Lohet and what might seem on paper to be rather pointless transcriptions of motets by Lassus and Gabrieli but which in fact work rather well. I fear that those who are attracted by the cornett divisions would find the organ music a bit boring, and perhaps vice-versa, alas. CB

I Love Lucette: French Theatrical Chansons Hesperus 53' 09"

Koch 3-7429-2

Music by Attaingnant, Compère, Févin, Godard, Gosse, Guyon, Jannequin, Moulu, Mouton, Richafort, Sermisy, Stokhem & anon

When, back in 1970, Peter Holman and I used to run a class for all-comers at Michael Thomas's harpsichord shop in Chiltern Street, one of my basic sources of music for renaissance ensemble was Howard Mayer Brown's *Music in the French Secular Theatre, 1400-1550*, and it this appealing repertoire that is recorded here by a group whose interests seem to be wider than most early-music ensembles. The scorings are varied, and present the variety, sparkle and verve of the music very well, and the songs are well presented by the soprano, Rosa Lamoreaux. The programme is extremely enjoyable, and for me the greater contrapuntal interest of the music gives this the edge over the comparable Italian disc reviewed below. CB

The Legacy of Toledo: Spanish Renaissance Music by Lobo, Morales and Torrentes Polyhymnia, Choristers from Winchester Cathedral, Richard Lowell Childress dir
Meridian CDE 84345 61' 12"

A. Lobo *Missa Beatae Dei genitrix, Libera me Domine, Quam pulchri sunt, Versa est in luctum*; Andrés de Torrentes *Deus tuorum militum, In festo Leocadiae, Nunc dimittis 8 toni*; Morales, *Magnificat 8 toni*.

This starts rather unpromisingly with a sound that is marked more by relentless enthusiasm than subtlety and is recorded too closely, so that individual voices are unblended. It is worth persevering, however, as it does get better and there is some interesting music here, much of it new to me, including two hymns and a canticle by the little-known Andrés de Torrentes, who provided the sort of *gebrauchsmusik* which was the daily diet at Toledo cathedral. These and some of the other pieces alternate polyphony and plainchant, with Bruno Turner providing the latter and some very informative liner notes. The chant is sung mensurally in the hymns but, strangely, not in the canticles. It would have been nice to have had the Guerrero motet on which the mass is based. The final two Lobo pieces sound as if sung by a different choir and lift the whole disc onto a higher plane. Something of a mixed bag, then, of interest mainly to those with a particular enthusiasm for Philip II's Spain. Noel O'Regan

Music for Mona Lisa Concordia 72' 27"

Metronome MET CD 1023

Busnois, Bruhier, Cara, Compère, Coppini, Dalza, Isaac, Japart, Josquin, Tromboncino & anon

'Tuesday 25th: Leonardo painting Mona Lisa. Background music: Josquin, Japart and Busnois'. Sadly, there is no such diary entry surviving from a Florentine musician of 1503, so Concordia have had to guess. I think he would have been happy with this

selection, varied and beautifully played. But Italian music at the time was not very complex; the most substantial (and moving) piece is by a composer from an earlier generation and another place, Busnois's *Je ne fay plus*, beautifully sung by Robin Blaze. If the title introduces listeners to Italian music of around 1500, all to the good. Even without that enticement, however, this is a fine selection which goes beyond the familiar *Tromboncino Vergine bella* or Isaac's *La Morra* and adds other enjoyable pieces. But there is a clash between the comparatively simple nature of much of the music and Leonardo's complex mind. *CB*

Winds and Voices II: Music at the Danish Court Chapel in the 1540s Copenhagen Cornetts & Sackbuts, Musica Ficta, Bo Holten 53' 33"

Marco Polo Da Capo 8.224077

Finck, Gombert, Josquin, Kugelmann, Presten, Senfl, Stolzer, Tham & anon

The music on this disc springs from the pages of a set of mid-16th century part books 'amongst the oldest and finest treasures of the Royal Library of Copenhagen'. The known greats are represented, Josquin, Gombert, Senfl, as well as some known primarily through this collection. The styles cover the sumptuous pre- and starker post-reformation, with pieces that very interestingly reconcile both. The music is of grand ambition. As happens at the peak flowering of a genre, such a highly developed and densely packed population of idioms and relationships leaves no room for caprice. The formality of working within such constraints does not need the unnecessary re-emphasis from the choir's and low brass's sometimes lumpy rhythms. The pitch occasionally struggles for a footing with the by-product of making the choir seem more numerous. In the instrumentally-elaborated chorales, the vocal lines are given to multiple voices high in their registers. This convincingly conveys the reformist fervour with which the original performances must surely have been shot through. It is good to see the further rehabilitation of instruments in renaissance 'vocal' music, including lyrical shawms and even crumhorns. There are some wonderfully lavish performances of Gombert and the lesser known Presten. Indeed there are some 'musical treasures' on display. *Stephen Cassidy*

Lo Sposalizio: The Wedding of Venice to the Sea (c.1600) The King's Consort, Robert King 88' 59"

Hyperion CDA67048 (2 CDs for the price of 1) Music by Andrea & Giovanni Gabrieli with Guami, Gussago, Kapsberger, Massaino, Monteverdi, Viadana & anon

These two discs depict the annual symbolic wedding of Venice to the sea, one with music for processions and the crossing of the lagoon, the other of the culminating high mass in San Nicolò on the Lido. This Ascension-Day extravaganza is described in contemporary accounts and paintings, but little formal record survives of the music used. Within this scope, an imaginative programme has been devised with ingenious

links to the theme. Whether the processions and journey in the admittedly monstrous ceremonial galley offered a practical environment or the lavish acoustic we hear for the pieces a8 & a16 is open to speculation. Notwithstanding, the disc fully justifies suspending disbelief. The recording offers some lesser-known repertoire and shows some old favourites in a new light. There is a bold variety of instrumentation and vocal mixes, including a marvellously sparse 12-part *Kyrie* by G. Gabrieli. Andrea's *Battle*, far from being used as a vehicle for some hackneyed brass techniques, shifts subtly between episodes and mood changes in a very revealing way, so that the battle is heard near at hand, from afar, and within its wider human context. Throughout, instruments are given their natural balance and there is no arbitrary forcing of single lines. The result is a luminous, middle-weighted sound which, particularly in the strings, perfectly straddles renaissance and baroque ideals. There is variety in everything except perhaps pace. By the time I reached the last pieces (Giovanni's wonderful *Sonata a22*), I was thirsty for something more playful and less steadily architectural. The disc finishes with a bell cacophony – all peals mixed into the foreground like a bright multi-scene postcard, rather than offering a cityscape with natural distances. If you can handle this, you will enjoy a superb pair of discs with some magnificent music-making.

Stephen Cassidy.

Much of the music is published by King's Music.

17th CENTURY

Child Sacred Choral music The Choir of Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge, Geoffrey Webber 65' 09"

ASV CD GAU 182

William Child (1606-97) was little more than a name to me till I heard this disc, and I am now puzzled why he should have been so neglected. The first piece, *Sing we merrily*, may sound like a good imitation of Gibbons, specifically of *Hosanna to the Son of David*, but that may have been a deliberate academic gesture in an impressive B. Mus exercise (although he was hardly a young student when he submitted it in 1631). The later pieces must have seemed a bit old-fashioned to Restoration listeners, though he was a skilled practitioner of the Italian style as his impressive setting from 1671 of *Lord rebuke me not* testifies. Sometimes, though, the passion seems a little routine. The Gaius choir (with Rachel Platt, Rebecca Outram, William Towers & Timothy Mirfin SSAB) make a very good case for Child. I hope that the music transcribed for it will be published. *CB*

3

Guédron Douce Beauté: Pierre Guédron et l'Air de Cour (1590-1640) The Boston Camerata, Joel Cohen 60' 02"

Erato 3984-21656-2

Also music by Ballard, Bataille, Boësset, A. le Roy, van Eyck, Voigtlaender & anon

We are used to the idea that an English lute-song can be performed in a variety of other

ways than by voice and lute; I met many of them as part-songs long before there were lutenists around in any quantity to play them. This disc opens our minds to the same possibilities with the French repertoire by Guédron and his contemporaries. Even if it did not include one of my favourite sopranos, Anne Azéma, I would recommend this heartily. The music is appealing, the rhythmic subtlety giving an extra edge to melodies that sometimes remind me of psalm tunes (an excuse to apologise for missing the group's recent disc of American hymns). Highly recommended. *CB*

Lully Ballet Music for the Sun King Arcadia Baroque Ensemble, Kevin Mallon 73' 22" **Naxos 8.554003 £**

This is, on one level, an enjoyable and welcome anthology of overtures, dances, vocal items and chaconnes from Lully's early years at court (the 1650s) plus a chaconne from *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* (1670). The programme is well structured and played with some particularly convincing *agréments* and *Inégalité*, though I did find the vocal items intrusive among what could well be used as *simphonies pour soupir*. There are, however a number of details that will irritate the fastidious explorer of the French baroque. The instrumentation tends towards the school of Christie approach (you are hereby warned about the kazoo!), there are no *basses de violon* and the pitch is 415 – all this under the proud banner of 'played on original instruments'. Whether or not you enjoy this will be, even more than usual, very much a matter of taste. *David Hansell*

Monteverdi Selva Morale ed altre raccolte spirituali A Sei Voci, Bernard Fabre-Garrus **Auvidis Astrée E 8625 62' 00"**

This contains four Vesper psalms from the 1641 collection and the Magnificat a8 (why are they not listed precisely as, e.g., *Dixit Dominus I a8* in the booklet?) Two things worried me at the start: the presence of a superfluous string instrument beneath the soprano duet and, a few seconds later, the entry of a choir at the first tutti. Study of more specific instrumental scorings of the period implies that you don't add a cello or whatever to organ parts (though at least here it is played, or recorded, tactfully) and this concertato style doesn't need a choir. By all means let choirs sing the music: it's enjoyable for them, and I'm very happy to sell larger quantities of the scores! But don't record it thus. One problem is the need the solo sopranos feel to outstrip the choir in the Magnificat, with excessive vibrato a consequence. What is a consort of viols doing on the disc? *Viole* may be specified, but that surely just means lower strings, not necessarily or even probably viols, as alternatives to trombones. Jean Lionnet, the note-writer, seems unnecessarily puzzled by the misleading situation of the parts in the Magnificat a8: all that has happened is that two of the instrumental parts are printed by mistake for two voice parts, a revealing mistake, since they show that the otherwise-unnotated *viole/trombone* parts do NOT consistently double the voice parts. The

duets included between the psalms are nicely sung (though again with string bass). The final criticism: the disc has a six minutes fewer than the 1h09 stated on the box. I wonder what would happen if you took it to your local trading standards officer. I don't want to be too off-putting. The performances would make an enjoyable concert, but don't quite have the edge to justify them on disc, irrespective of my academic disbelief. CB

Monteverdi & Byrd Masses for four voices
Duodena Cantitans, Petr Danek cond 46' 57"
Supraphon SU 3328-2 231
Byrd Mass a4; Frescobaldi *Canzona*; Monteverdi Mass a4 (1641); Simpson *Divisions in e* (Division Viol)

This is a peculiar CD: it combines two great mass settings with a canzona by Frescobaldi and a set of Simpson's Divisions. This last is explained by the presence of a very good gamba player and continuo team (theorbo and organ, which also play in the Monteverdi). The singing is well-tuned and neatly phrased. In the Byrd, I was a little distracted by the Czech pronunciation, in which *descendit* becomes "day-tsen-deet", but again the actual sound of the (slightly smaller) choir was very nice – the intoning tenor is a bit weedy, though. My only other complaint is the length of the recording – couldn't we have had a Czech mass of similar style, too? BC

Pachelbel Organ Compositions and Canon
(*Historic Organs of Bohemia IV*) Jaroslav Tuma on 1726 organ at the Kladruby Monastery
Supraphon SU 3355-2 131 70' 00"

Pachelbel can appear to be a rather inconsequential organ composer, perhaps because many of his pieces are short, for manuals only and suffer from the neo-baroque brigade. Why is he so often played on fluty chamber-organ sounds? Although there are some chamber works, most of his keyboard pieces were intended for substantial church organs. This CD is a very good demonstration of the difference that this can make. The pieces are grouped sensibly by mode, and there are sufficient of the larger scale works to give substance to the programme. The organ is a fascinating example of the distinctive Bohemian Baroque school with its strong and pungent pleno – it is hard to believe that there are no reeds. The modified meantone temperament is particularly noticeable in the descending chromatic theme of the Fuga in d minor (track 2) and the tonally colourful Ciacona in F minor (track 18) – lovely examples of the way the different keys could change the sound of the instrument to suit the mood of the music. The playing is rich and characterful and should make organists think again about Pachelbel.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Friedens-Seuffitzer und Jubel-Geschrey: Music for the Peace of Westphalia Weser-Renaissance Bremen, Manfred Cordes 138' 16"
cpo 999 571-2 (2 CDs in box)

Music by Albert, Berger, Sophie Elizabeth von Braunschweig, Dresen, Franck, Hammerschmidt, Herbst, Hildebrand, Jacob Kindermann, Müller, Rupffenbart, Schop, Schütz (SWV 418, 465), Selle, Staden, Stobaeus, Werlin, Widmann & anon

'During and after the 30 Years War' might have been a better description. This is not a dramatic reconstruction of some historical event. Rather, it's a compilation of German music from the early 17th century, some imploring powerful rulers to bring the fighting and the associated devastation and massive loss of life to an end, some celebrating the cessation of the war. Some of it has no direct link with any historical event and the programme has been drawn together around a rather vague theme. But there is little chance that any of it would be performed, let alone recorded, had this project not taken place. Weser Renaissance Bremen, as readers will know, are specialists in this repertoire. In this recording, there are ten singers with an ensemble of brass and strings with continuo. I particularly enjoyed Schütz's *Da pacem Domine* and *Nun danket alle Gott*, Hammerschmidt's *Verleih uns Frieden* and Thomas Selle's *Lobet den Herrn in seinen Heilighum*, all of which are on the first of the two CDs. The singing is generally excellent and the playing extremely stylish. It is an interesting set, ranging from small-scale pieces for solo voice and a few instruments to much larger celebratory works, the Sophie-Elisabeth of Brunswick item being, in effect, a short serenata. BC



LATE BAROQUE

Bach Cantatas vol. 7 Ingrid Schmithüsen, Yoshikazu Mera, Makoto Sakurada, Peter Kooij SATB, Bach Collegium Japan, Masaaki Suzuki 77' 31"
BIS-CD-881
Cantatas 61, 63, 132, 172

Fewer direct incorporations of musicians from Europe's Low Countries appear here than did in Volume 6, but the introduction of Japanese baroque trumpeters, oboists and solo singers bring no decline in the secure and expressive quality of playing; rather, they are enhanced as the ensemble gains in its own identity. Three of these Cantatas are festive: 61, *Nun komm...* opened the church year in Weimar with dramatic forecasts of saving grace; it has just the right blend of drama and contemplation here, with the door-knocking recitative specially effective. 172, *Erschallet, ihr Leider*, composed for Whitsunday, presents various problems in performance, but these are navigated with the authority we have learnt to expect of Dr Suzuki, mainly because of his well-selected and trained soloists. Cantata 63, for Christmas Day, which also happened to be the Ducal Birthday of the young and ill-fated Johann Ernst in Weimar, calls for even more special celebration, although this could have been more clearly considered in the notes. I think that it could be more

grand in effect without any loss. The remaining item, 132, *Bereit die Wege*, is a study in poetry and music of the concept of pilgrimage. So well-pronounced are the words and so well do the instrumentalists, as well as the singers, express their meanings, that the significance of the contexts become far more apparent than they do in many a European reading. It is very much indeed to be hoped that financial problems in the Far East have no effect on BIS and Bach-Collegium Japan's internationally-acclaimed joint venture, and that further recordings may be issued regularly; the notion of a possible complete cycle, always there beneath the surface, deserves responsible patronage.

Stephen Daw

Bach Concertos for Two, Three and Four Harpsichords Robert Hill, Michael Behringer, Gerald Hambitzer, Christoph Anselm Noll *hpscds*, Cologne Chamber Orchestra, Helmut Müller-Brühl 71' 46"
Naxos 8.554217 £

This is obviously not a complete collection (BWV 1063 in D minor for 3 harpsichords was presumably had the short straw drawn on its behalf), but in its way it is distinguished, with stylish playing at modern pitch on modern strings. This is mainly because of the lively musical playing of the solo parts by all 5 harpsichordists, who tend to play with crisp rather than subtle attack, yet also with very carefully note-lengths and timings on what sound like suitably varied instruments. Speeds and expressions generally seem tasteful, lively and at times refreshingly brisk. At bargain price, too good a chance to miss, I think. Stephen Daw

Bach The Musical Offering Capella Istropolitana, Christian Benda 59' 14"
Naxos 8.553286 £

All performances of Bach's grand Royal Celebration involve some degree of arrangement, but this one is highlighted in the title because of certain factors:

1. All the instruments are of modern design, played tastefully with modern techniques.
2. Larger than minimal scorings sometimes apply.
3. The editor seems to be oblivious to modern scholarly agreement that the two *Ricercare* were designed to be played on keyboards.

This interpretation does have one special quality, which is its incorporation of no fewer than four solutions to the puzzle-reverse-canonical (*in Epidiapente*), clearly identified through separate scorings. This is an imaginative bonus, and leads me to speculate whether Bach expected only one solution. The playing is, throughout, expressive and unusually happy – surely qualities required of such music.

Stephen Daw

Bach The Musical Offering Schönbrunn Ensemble 48' 87"
Globe GLO 5172

The Schönbrunn Ensemble play copies and historic instruments well, and treat the great offering well, if in rather an orthodox

way. The counterpoints are divided into three sections, the first two prefaced by their keyboard *Ricercare* and the third consisting of the trio sonata and its perpetual canonic appendix. Since the sonata seems to have been something of an afterthought, added after Bach's promised completion for Frederick the Great, this is a logical ordering although usually the 6-part *Ricercar* is heard at the end, rather than the start, of the second set of canons. In this performance, the harpsichordist Menno van Delft somehow manages to stress the difference between playing solo and in ensemble effectively, but both *Ricercars* start with the two opening motifs separated rather widely in timing. Otherwise they are well performed, each as its own individual whole. The playing of the baroque flute by Marten Toot is mostly very good, and the bowed-strings play quite well, if without the real distinction of some of their competitors. The whole is sensibly recorded and packaged, with a dependable commentary.

Stephen Daw

Bach Die Kunst der Fuge Keller Quartet
ECM New Series 457 849-1 71' 59"

Bach's expressively captivating Art was published by his musical heirs without specified instrumentation, and is not surprisingly popular with string quartets; only a few of the *Contrapuncti* require more than 4 players, and the rhythmic/ melodic/ contrapuntal riches of Bach's invention renders joint participation particularly pleasurable. However, the Keller Quartet has taken adaptation to modern String Quartet format one stage further, or so it seems to me. The interpretation, though completely venerable in its own way, treats Bach's wonderful late masterpiece as though it really were late Beethoven, late Schubert or even late Mozart. That, surely, is anachronism; there might even be something to be said for treating it as Bartok (any period) or late 29th century (Ligeti? Kancheli? For Kronos Quartet?). I have dutifully heard the performance through and read a 'justification' by the German philosopher/novelist/musico-ologist Wolfgang Hildesheimer in the accompanying notes. There are good parts. Such had the notorious egg.

Stephen Daw

Handel Julius Caesar David Sabella *Caesar*, Sujung Kim *Cleopatra*, Johnny Maldonado *Ptolemy*, Malin Fritz *Cornelia*, Robert Crowe *Sextus*, David Stoneman *Achillas*, Lendon Munday *Curio*, Ginger Inabinet *Nirena*, Virginia Opera, Peter Mark cond 140' 14" Koch 3-7406-2 (2 discs in box)

Despite English title, sung in Italian

This is a studio repeat of a stage production given in Norfolk, Virginia, in January 1997, and has to be judged as such. Two massive cuts reduce the opera to two parts: Caesar's first meeting with the disguised Cleopatra in Act 1 is immediately followed by his scene with Ptolemy, including *Va tacito*; and Cleopatra's *V'adoro pupille* leads straight into the scene of Caesar's betrayal and *Se pietà*. (These cuts are not unintelligent: it is surprising how little of the basic plot is lost.) Other losses include the opening chorus,

but recitatives are generally done complete or not at all. Countertenor David Sabella is not up to the title role: he is taxed by fast semiquaver runs, and, maybe in recognition, most of his arias are shortened. (*Va tacito* appears in a weird version more likely to have been generated in the editing process than in real life: two identically embellished statements of the A section, but no B section.) Sujung Jim finds more imperiousness in Cleopatra than wit or sensuality, the latter qualities probably inhibited by Mark's insensitive conducting. Fritz is a warm *Cornelia*, Stoneman a dry *Achillas*. The countertenors Maldonado (*Ptolemy*) and Crowe (*Sextus*) make the strongest impression, the former maintaining power over a wide range, the latter, sounding like an edgy soprano, effective as the vengeful teenager. Both go wild in their cadenzas, Maldonado touching a high Bb and Crowe a top C; Dr Johnson's dictum on women preachers unavoidably comes to mind. *Anthony Hicks*

Handel Serse Judith Malafronte *Serse*, Jennifer Smith *Romilda*, Lisa Milne *Atalanta*, Susan Bickley *Amastre*, Brian Asawa *Arsamene*, David Thomas *Elviro*, Dean Ely *Ariodate*, Hanover Band & Chorus, Nicholas McGegan 176' 55" BMG Conifer 75605 51312 2 3 CDs in box

I had a really difficult time with this set. I've ended up discussing it with, among others, Alastair Harper, who used to write for *EMR*. His interesting, if somewhat surprising, response to the set was that the singing was not what was important about opera – far important is Handel's skill in characterisation and taut theatrical planning, both of which are readily evident both in the piece itself and the presentation of this particular production. For me, though, the singing was a formidable block to enjoyment. There are exceptions to a norm of wide vibrato and some rather scary cadential improvisations – Judith Malafronte's *Se bramate d'amar* in the second act is wonderfully exciting. Her opening *Omnia mai fū* had my hair standing on end! David Thomas is wonderful as *Elviro*. The other singers get under the skin of their characters. The choruses with added wind are very good indeed; the orchestral playing is crisp and light; the continuo playing is a comfortable mix between pushing the beat on and sensitive accompaniment. My reservations boil down to my personal preferences and a desire to hear the notes which Handel actually wrote without having to consult the score. But other people, including Alastair, thoroughly enjoyed the set.

BC

For BC's review of a book on *Serse* see p. 4.

Handel Dixit Dominus, Nisi Dominus Ensemble William Byrd, Académie Sainte-Cécile, Graham O'Reilly 43' 49" L'empreinte digitale ED13085

It is odd to have just two of Handel's three Vesper psalms on a disc playing for less than 45': an opportunity taken, perhaps, rather than a long-planned project. The two really slow movements ('De torrente' in *Dixit*, 'Cum dederit' in *Nisi*) are beautifully rapt, and everything else is generally lively, with

the two-to-a-part vocal lines clear, but also a shade too careful. I found the continuo (with both organ and harpsichord) over-prominent, especially at the start of 'Dominus a dextris tuis' in *Dixit*, where the suspensions in the voices should surely dominate the texture. *Nisi* opens too vigorously: a more relaxed tempo is usually (and I think rightly) preferred, All decently done, but I am not sure that this disc was needed.

Anthony Hicks

Handel Tra le fiamme: Italian cantatas & trio sonatas Catherine Bott, The Purcell Quartet Chandos CHAN 0620 69' 47" + *Notte placida e cheta* & op. 2/5, op. 5/4, op. 5/7

The sonatas-and-cantatas combination is becoming commonplace, possibly because it is supposed to supply the listener with a ready-made concert, but more probably because sonatas can be recorded more cheaply than cantatas. The two trios chosen here from Handel's Op. 5 set are drawn entirely from previously-composed orchestral music, no.4 in G being a shapeless affair whose finest movement, the central chaconne, is severely diminished by the loss of its viola part, its woodwind and the sonority of full strings. Op. 5/7 in B flat, based mainly on viola-less Chandos anthem movements, is more effective, and Op. 2/5 in G minor, an original composition, is best of all, with lots of imaginative counterpoint. The Purcell Quartet's performances match the musical quality, the Op. 5 dance movements being surprisingly staid. Catherine Bott, usually an exciting singer, disappoints in *Tra le fiamme*, and the treatment of the accompaniment seems misconceived, with only single violins (despite doublings by paired recorders or oboes) and no harpsichord, the obbligato viola da gamba part taking the entire harmonic continuo role with consequent diminishment of colour and flexibility. The opening movement has the words 'Tra le fiamme tu scherzi per gioco', but the music plods along with no sense of playfulness and, despite all the references to Icarus and his flight, remains earth-bound. It was no surprise to find that the timing of 20' 14" is three minutes longer than the more successful versions by Emma Kirkby (with orchestral strings – L'Oiseau-Lyre 414473-2) and Julianne Baird (Dorian DOR-90147). Bott's other contribution is delightful, however. The recording of *Notte placida e cheta* (published only recently in Vol. 2 of the HHA edition of instrumental cantatas) is not, as claimed, the first – it appeared on a 1989 Hungaroton disc (HCD 12981), sung by Mária Zádori – but the new version, rightly using solo strings, is the finer, with Bott responding alertly and charmingly to the swiftly changing moods.

Anthony Hicks

Telemann The Fourth Book of Quartets (Paris c.1752). Wilibert Hazelzet fl, Alda Stuurop vln, Wim ten Have vla, Jacques Ogg hpscd, Lidewij Scheifes vlc 51' 06" Globe GLO 5146

Telemann's success with the French publishers Le Clerc during his stay in Paris

in 1737 was largely due to the popularity of his first book of quartets for flute, strings and continuo, which were admired and copied well into following generations. These earliest pieces paid homage to the French style in form, content and title, as in the deliciously innovative *Nouveaux Quatuors* published as book two. The set recorded here, however, constitutes a fourth book, published in Paris around 1752, by which time Telemann had made obvious concessions to fashionable Italianism. He uses the term *Sonata* exclusively and employs a four-movement pattern. There are some remarkable slow movements with long, recitative-like harmonic progressions successfully dispensing with the need for flowing melodic lines. The music, however, is unmistakably Telemann, and the performances, as expected from players of this calibre, give the works the character and sensitivity they fully deserve. *Marie Ritter*

Vivaldi *L'estro armonico: 12 Concertos op. 3*
Europa Galante, Fabio Biondi 103' 12"
Virgin Veritas 7243 5 45315 2 1 (2 CDs)

This is a set to delight and frustrate at the same time. As always with Biondi, all one's preconceptions are challenged – Vivaldi's, too, perhaps, since the 12 concertos are not even recorded in the printed order. Some start with a gradual acceleration (try No. 11), others grind to a halt; it's not difficult to imagine Vivaldi's bow bursting into flames if some of the tempi are to be believed, while others seem distinctly leisurely (try the fugal allegro of No. 11). Ornamentation seems (at first hearing) excessive – the printed line vanishes even in the very quick movements and there are exciting bow strokes and pizzicatos, none of which are printed in the original edition. Be that as it may, I am wary of judging this set. Only the other day, I listened to Biondi's recording of Corelli's Op. 6, of which I similarly wary on its appearance and was rather shocked to find myself putting it on again immediately afterwards, so impressed had I been. My advice, then, is to buy it, listen to it, leave it for a few days and then listen again. You won't regret giving it time! *BC*

Vivaldi *Flute Concerti Vol. 1* Béla Drahos, Nicolaus Esterházy Sinfonia 63' 15"
Naxos 8.553365 £
RV 88-91, 96, 99, 107

In recent months Naxos has produced several excellent period-instrument recordings, so I was a little disappointed to discover that this latest Vivaldi release uses modern instrumentalists from the Hungarian State Symphony Orchestra. Having said that, whilst the playing is unashamedly modern in approach, it is sensitive in its own way and has a lot to offer musically. The chosen concerti are in fact all chamber works for flute, oboe, violin, bassoon and continuo, including the RV90 version of *Il Gardellino* without orchestra. The power of the modern instruments makes for a much bigger overall sound than one might expect, and the flute is given super-prominence at the expense of the other (unnamed) instru-

mentalists, but all in all this is a pleasant hour of listening, with well documented programme notes. *Marie Ritter*

Music for 2 Harpsichords Ton Koopman, Tini Mathot 76' 24"
Erato 3984-21657-2
W. F. Bach Concerto in F; A.-L. Couperin *Quatuor 2, Simphonie; F. Couperin Chaconne (from L'Impériale); Mozart Fugue in c K426, Sonata in D K381* Soler *Concerto 6*

I have been underwhelmed by two other harpsichord discs I've heard recently (though not the one reviewed below), so this one, which is hugely entertaining, and contains some very imaginative and witty playing, is a real treat. The opening D major 'concerto' by Soler, like all the pieces on the disc, is brilliantly effective, and the harpsichords, copies of Ruckers and Couchet by Kroesbergen, are well matched, with just the right balance between clarity, suavity and rudeness. Koopman's playing – which I've always thought of as a kind of beautifully ordered chaos – is a constant source of inspiration, and remarkably well matched with Tini Mathot's, to the extent that it is well nigh impossible to identify the two audibly. There is a tremendous sense of fun in this recording, and some well-calculated risk-taking – I can't remember the last time I laughed (for the right reasons) listening to a CD. Heartily recommended.

Robin Bigwood

Harpsichord Recital at Dyrham Park Maggie Cole 73' 10"
Droffig/National Trust NT CD 013
Arne Sonata 3; Bryers After Handel's *Vespers*; Handel Suites 1 & 3; J.C. Bach op. 17/5; Scarlatti K9 & 18;

This is an exceptionally good recital disc which, were it not for the English bias of the programme, would also be a fantastic general introduction to the harpsichord. The avoidance of French repertoire is, of course, understandable in the light of the recording venue and, to a certain extent, the National Trust association, but it struck me as a little strange, that the instrument used was a copy of the Goermans-Taskin (1764-83) and not, for example, a mid century Kirkmann. That said, the harpsichord sounds wonderful, and works well with all the pieces. The inclusion of the Bryers piece is justified, especially given the Handel connection, and is accessible enough that most Baroque die-hards won't reach for the skip button – not for a while, anyway.

Robin Bigwood

CLASSICAL

C. P. E. Bach *The Solo Keyboard Music 1. The Prussian Sonatas 1.* Miklós Spányi clavichord
Bis BIS-CD-878 75' 39"
H. 4, 24-27 (=Wq 65/2, 48/1-4)

The resourceful soloist Miklós Spányi, not content with initiating the first recorded series covering all of this composer's keyboard Concertos, is now commencing the first comprehensive attempt on his music for solo keyed instruments. His Concerto records have already clearly

shown his sensitivity when it comes to specific choice of instrument in that most transitional of periods, and this first disc in the new venture proves to be no exception, since he has elected to play the Berlin repertoire on a fine, large unfretted clavichord built and owned by his Belgian colleague Joris Potvliegh; not only is this an authoritative choice, but he also knows and plays it well. The contrasts in this repertoire between a businesslike opening *allegro*, a far more contemplative slow movement and a jolly, faster-still *finale* might seem obvious to newcomers like me, but it is the way in which every movement's individuality is sought and stressed that is special here. Possibly a few words of warning regarding appropriate volume-settings might have been included. Played back loudly, even this delightful clavichord may become unbearable.

Stephen Daw

G. A. Benda *Romeo und Julie* Heidrun Cordes, Claron McFadden, Simone Brähler SSS, Scot Weir T, Christian Immler, Ralf Emge *Bar Bar*, Hermann Treusch, Christoph Tomanek *speakers*, La Stagione Frankfurt, Michael Schneider 91' 27"
cpo 999 496-2 2 CDs in box

Gotter's libretto after (a very long way after) Shakespeare was set by Benda for Gotha in 1776 shortly after his better known (and more successful) melodramas. There is rare fascination in hearing this Singspiel ('serious opera' and 'play with singing' is how it was described in its first years), but its mixture of singing and merely speaking characters, and of various musical styles, is not wholly comfortable. Whereas Benda's melodramas are firmly integrated, the mixture here tends to dissipate tension. Julie, with four arias and a share in five ensembles, has easily the largest part, and very well Heidrun Kordes takes it, with warm, expressive singing and a touch of the tragic potential. As her confidante, Laura, Claron McFadden displays a pleasing if somewhat shrill voice, and a fine sense of style. Of the men, again only two (plus a solo Mourner at the funeral) actually sing: Christian Immler as Capellet, the proud, unyielding father (baritone), and Scot Weir as an expressive if underemployed tenor hero. The chorus is impressive in the starkly magnificent funeral scene (though mourning is premature: the lovers live, the warring families are reconciled). La Stagione is warm and attentive throughout, thanks to Michael Schneider's sympathetic direction. This is a valuable issue.

Peter Branscombe

Hofmann *Cello Concertos* Tim Hugh vlc & dir, Northern Sinfonia 68' 23"
Naxos 8.553853 £
Concertos C1, C3, D1 & D3 (from the catalogue of Badley, whose Artaria Editions publishes them)

This is the latest in the enterprising Naxos series *The 18th-century concerto*. The four pieces are in the standard three-movement form and are scored for strings and brass. No-one who likes the Haydn concertos will be disappointed by the compositions – the outer movements are bright and breezy, while the slower middle movements are

lyrical and sometimes exploit interesting colours (one has the accompanying strings playing pizzicato.) The notes draw attention to Hofmann's predilections for high-position work, but this, apparently, was no problem for Tim Hugh, apart from slightly close miking at the start of his very first entry. The Northern Sinfonia are on fine form. The enormous charm of the music and the richness of the cello playing are enough to recommend this disc to me. *Daniel Baker*

Kleinknecht 5 Sonate da Camera Wilbert Hazelzet *fl.*, Jacques Ogg *fp.* Christiaan Norde *vlc* 51' 57" **Globe GLO 5135**

Jakob Friedrich Kleinknecht is a composer of whom little has been documented, and until recently his works have lain undiscovered. It seems that these flute pieces were written for a younger brother, Johann Stephan, apparently one of the best flautists of his time. Both brothers worked at the court in Bayreuth, where Jakob Friedrich became Kapellmeister in 1756. Musically, these works are full of dark, dramatic contrasts and virtuosic display – a real expression of *sturm und drang* ideals. The playing is appropriately pacy, robust and energetic, and throughout Wilbert Hazelzet retains enviable tonal flexibility. The use of a fortepiano also adds real dynamic power, functioning here as a continuo instrument with cello, but hinting strongly at the future independence of the piano as an accompanying instrument. An interesting and exciting disc altogether. *Marie Ritter*

Linley The Song of Moses, Let God arise Julia Gooding, Sophie Daneman, Robin Blaze, Andrew King, Andrew Dale Forbes SSATB, Holst Singers, The Parley of Instruments, Peter Holman 66' 31" **Hyperion CDA67038**

Every newly-encountered work by the younger Thomas Linley increases my conviction that his tragic early death robbed this country not only of a major talent, but a man who had the gifts to have become one of our greatest composers. *The Song of Moses* is an oratorio first given during the Drury Lane season of 1777. Despite a wretched libretto, the confidence and assurance of the writing are astonishing for a composer yet to attain his 23rd birthday. In particular the choruses, sung with great conviction and verve by the Holst Singers, have enormous power and dramatic impact. The bulk of the solo writing falls to the two sopranos, of whom Sophie Daneman is markedly the more impressive. *Let God arise*, a large-scale anthem composed for the Three Choirs Festival in 1773, is marginally less striking, but the choral writing is again remarkably accomplished, the final chorus 'Wonderful art thou' concluding the disc in resplendent fashion. Holman directs with fervour and an obvious belief in this splendid music. Praise for the spacious recording rounds off my enthusiastic review of yet another essential English Orpheus release. *Brian Robins*

Quatuors concertants Quatuor Joachim 57' 13" **Koch Schwann 3-6411-2**
Boulogne op. 14/6, Cambini op. 1/2; Gossec op. 15/1; Jadin op. 1/3 **Koch Schwann 3-6410-2**
Quatuors et Quintettes avec hautbois Jean Pierre Arnaud, Quatuor Altair 51' 52" **Koch Schwann 3-6410-2**
J. F. Garnier ob qntet; R. Kreutzer ob qntet; F. A. D. Philidor ob qntet; G. Rava (?) ob qntet op. 6/5; C. J. Toeschi ob qntet

These two discs feature music which is all new to me. The playing on both is very good of its kind, but not what *EMR* listeners will want to listen to for long periods, I suspect. The Joachim Quartet is slightly more stylistically aware, but choose the more difficult music – the Cambini has some very high passages! Their disc has the more interesting music; anyone who purchased the recent Paul Goodwin recording of oboe quartets will find Pierre Arnaud's offerings dull by comparison. Apart from the rather insipid Gossec, the string quartets are extremely competent pieces. I thoroughly enjoyed the Jadin and the Boulogne, which I thought I recognised, though that is fairly unlikely. For chamber music fans only, I think. *BC*

19th CENTURY

Schubert Winterreise Ernst Haefliger, Jörg Ewald Dähler (Brodmann *fp* c. 1820) 67' 36" **Claves CD 50-8008**

This is a welcome reissue of a recording made in 1980. I remember hearing Haefliger's Evangelists in the Bach Passions in 1970, and he must have been in his 50's then, so this recording was made when most singers are thinking of retiring. The voice is stunning, and the recording is worth having for that alone. I have some reservations about his approach. The first five songs lack intensity, as though he's saving himself, but always the tone is beautiful, and by the time he gets to *Auf dem Flusse* the anguish begins to bite, with contrasts of tone and dynamics. The piano is beautifully played, with a wide range of tone and dynamics, and clever use of the damper pedal as 'brays' in *Der Leiermann*. It's a moving performance, worthy of this masterpiece, but I would not place it ahead of Prégardien/Staier, which has so much more contrast, variety, and a driving intensity right from the opening notes. However, admirers of beautiful singing should have this one as well – it's a different approach, dated in some respects, and unmatched in beauty of tone. *Robert Oliver*

Sounds of Splendour: a glorious selection of music by Handel, C. P. E. Bach, Mozart and Stanley played on the 1830 Appleton Organ by Martin Souter 71' 53" **Isis Records CD033**

C.P.E.Bach *Sonata in Bb H134*; Handel *Organ Concerto op.4/6, The Celebrated Water Musick*; Mozart *Andante in F K616*; Stanley: *Voluntary in d op.6/5*

Although the naff title and sleeve note style puts this CD in the gift-shop category, this is an interesting organ. Built in 1830 by

Thomas Appleton, it is rooted in the English 18th-century tradition (the sleeve note suggests a German tonal character). After a chequered history, it was restored in 1982 by Lawrence Trupiano, and now overlooks the Equestrian Court of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. It has two manuals – a long compass nine-stop Great and short compass four-stop Swell (with long-compass Stopped Diapason bass). The Great is topped by a Sesquialtera and divided Trumpet, the Swell by a Hautboy. It is a shame there is no specification or information about the temperament in the notes – it sounds close to equal temperament, which doesn't do the tone any favours. The main musical interest of this CD is in the arrangements for solo keyboard by [or for] John Walsh (Handel's publisher) of Handel's Concerto in B flat (Opus 4/6) and the Water Music. These are the versions that people were more likely to hear at the time, whether in church, concert hall or pleasure garden. The playing veers from the musically persuasive to the frankly unsteady. Articulation and consistency of line are the two main culprits – what can appear to be a rather nice inflection on one note can become an irritating mistiming on another, and touch is not always sensitive to the stops being used. For example, English (or even American) Trumpets do not take kindly to staccato chords, and Diapasons need time to speak in the bass. There is also something odd about the recorded acoustic; on track 1 (1'45"), for example, it suddenly becomes more expansive. Listen before you buy, if you can. *Andrew Benson-Wilson*

DAS ALTE WERK

All discs Teldec *Das Alte Werk* prefixed 3984- suffixed -2 and priced ££

21709 Llibre Vermel, Robin et Marion: Secular Music c. 1300 Studio der frühen Musik, Thomas Binkley 58' 30" rec 1966

21710 Lasso Prophetiae Sibyllarum, Moresche Münchener Vokalsolisten & Flöten-ensemble, Hans Ludwig Hirsch 51' 17" rec 1970

21334 Morley The First Booke of Ayres Nigel Rogers T, Nikolaus Harnoncourt *viol*, Eugen M. Dombois *lute*, Gustav Leonhardt *virginal & hpscd* 58' 24" rec 1970

21798 Biber Requiem, Sacred Works Die Wiener Sängerknaben, Hans Gillesberger dir Concentus Musicus, Nikolaus Harnoncourt dir 58' 00" rec 1968/69

Laetatus sum a7, Am Festo Trium Regum Muttetum Natale a6, Requiem in f, Sonata St. Polycarpi a9, Sonata vln solo representativa

21711 Bach: Cantatas 51, 202 & 209 Agnes Giebel, ensemble dir. Gustav Leonhardt 64' 48" rec 1965

21708 Beethoven Chamber Music 50' 17" rec 1969

There's a lot of reissuing of the first generation of early-instrument recordings at

present. Robin Bigwood reviews the Gustav Leonhardt Edition on page 18. This further selection to commemorate forty years of *Das Alte Werk* is a powerful reminder that, even in the historical process of rediscovering the past, we should not be too confident in the idea of progress.

Thomas Binkley's imagination is the source of much of the present manner of performing medieval secular monophony, and this disc provides an exciting sample of his manner; if you don't have any of his recordings, this is a good one to start with, though mostly concentrating on short pieces. The booklet says more about the musicians than the music, and like the rest of the series except the Morley, it suffers from an absence of texts and translations. The selection is neatly done so that Binkley's characteristically-rich, Arab-inspired elaboration around monophonic material is kept in its place; historically, in terms of its (possibly harmful) influence on later performers, that was an important part of his work, but the more restrained examples here wear better.

The Lassus would be more highly recommended if the Hilliard performance of the *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* had not appeared in direct competition (see *EMR* 42 p. 20). I find the faint tinkling of a harpsichord irritating; perhaps there is some historical reason for its inclusion, but if so, it needed to be integrated more into the overall sound. Its presence must confuse the intonation. I remember that I enjoyed the *Moresche* immensely when this first appeared. Now they sound a bit Germanic in their heavy instrumentation; but they are still worth hearing.

I suspect that this is was the first-ever complete recording of an English lute-song book, and at the time it seemed perverse to choose Morley rather than Dowland. That may have been true, but no one has recorded Morley *in extenso* since and, with Nigel Rogers word-perfect but much less hard-edged than he often is, the singing might even be called charming. The photo of him must have looked old-fashioned even when it was taken.

This first recording of the Requiem in f (the reissue needs the key to distinguish it from the subsequently-discovered Requiem a15) opened many ears to the virtues of the work itself and the composer in general, and its reissue is most welcome, even without texts: there isn't even a first line for the Christmas motet (it is *Alleluia*, which is perhaps why a more specific title is used). The disc begins with that most impressive of trumpet pieces, the *Sonata St Polycarpi*, and also includes a delightful performance by Alice Harnoncourt of the *Rappresentatio avium*. Agnes Giebel in Bach seems an odd choice to reissue; the voice sounds distant, but I'm not sure if I want to hear her more closely, and the gavotte of No. 202 sounds so heavy! The Beethoven wind anthology is delightful. The main works are the clarinet trio op.11, with Piet Honingh, Anner Bylsma and Stanley Hoogland, and the horn sonata op. 17, with Hermann Baumann. These are

supplemented by an Allegro and Minuet for two flutes WoO 26 (Frans Vester & Martine Bakker) and three movements of an incomplete quintet for oboe, three horns and bassoon. I found it very pleasant listening: a nice collection even if there may perhaps be rival discs of op. 11 & 17 with claims to attention. CB

IN FLAUNDERS WHILOM...

Egidius waer bestu blevien: Gruuthuse MS ca. 1380-90 Paul Rans Ensemble 75' 07" Eufoda 1170

Zingen en Spielen in Vlaamse steden en gebijnhoven 1400-1500 Capilla Flamenca Eufoda 1266 60' 02"

Antwerps Liedboek Paul Rans Ensemble Eufoda 1183 60' 09"

Renaissance-polyfonie in Brugge: Het liedboek van Zeghere van Male Capilla Flamenca Eufoda 1155 60' 23"

Lassus Profane motetten Currende, Erik van Nevel 66' 02" Eufoda 1239

The prospect of a disc of monophonic medieval music in Flemish with no translations in the booklet is likely to put off most of our readers, so I have no high hopes of boosting sales of the first disc listed above. I was interested in how different the whole approach was to the performance of medieval Occitan and French music, though some realisations of *Carmina burana* are more similar. I'm not sure whether the versions may not be a bit elaborate. Paul Rans is a marvellous singer; you can hear every word, even if you can't understand them. He shapes the music well, and has a convincing presence. The Gruuthuse MS contains 147 songs, probably written (both words and music) by Jan Moritoen, who later became a respectable member of the Bruges town council. What did the parish dishmaster do? [Perhaps cue for a cartoon, but we already have one this month.] The Antwerp Songbook is a collection of 217 texts, some satirical, some jolly, which met with disapproval by the Spanish authorities when published in 1544. Dutch scholars have been able to associate many of the texts with melodies, and Paul Rans performs lively versions of 20 of them, again with amazing clarity of diction. The settings are from sources ranging from c.1459 to c.1650. The music is a little more self-sufficient than on the Gruuthuse disc, but the lack of translations is still a handicap.

Capilla Flamenca's disc of music from Flemish cities and beguinages (see next column) begins with a piece of primitive polyphony, *Tam veneranda*, whose stark beauty I find entrancing, and is followed by an impressive, again simple, *Credo*: choral homophony alternating with full-blooded organ. The most familiar item is de la Torre's *La Spagna*, though most will recognise the tune of another *binatim* set-

ting: *Jesus ad templum* has the tune of *Puer nobis natus est* (Unto us a boy is born). The contents of the disc look a bit of a rag-bag, but there are marvellous performances of a variety of music, both plain and sophisticated, sung with utter conviction. The booklet has texts and translations in four languages. Renaissance Polyphony in Bruges has only the original and Flemish texts. The music is from a songbook of 1542 owned by a Bruges merchant Zeghere van Male, a substantial set of four partbooks whose contents include 13 parody masses, 64 motets and 125 chansons. I'm slightly less convinced by the performances here than on the Cities and Beguines disc: they seem just a little too careful. The repertoire is more mainstream than the previous discs, with Josquin, la Rue, Appenzeller, Sermisy and Verdelot,

Currende's disc of secular motets by Lassus begins with the deservedly well-known ten-part setting of the Easter hymn *Aurora lucis rutilat*. Hardly secular! But Erik van Nevel knows what he is doing and the other hymn, *Iam lucis ortu sidere*, turns out to have a parody text as a drinking song. The other texts are not liturgical, even if they have a religious or moral message, such as *In hora ultima peribunt omnia: tuba, tibia, cithara, iocus, risus, saltus, cantus et discantus* (advice on the precise meaning of the last two nouns would be welcome); sadly, like the only other well-known piece, *Musica Dei donum*, this is played without text, so the word-painting is obscured. Having spent part of the day in which I am writing this singing and playing organ in two Lassus motets (one being *Aurora...*), I find that there is not enough feeling of the music springing from the words here, though the sound is impressive and the power of Lassus's music emerges. It is well worth hearing: marvellous music with interesting scorings. The booklet has texts in five languages, including the items performed instrumentally. Generosity, or did the booklet compiler not know that some were unnecessary? CB

* Beguinages. This term for where they live is a coinage. Several readers have expressed curiosity about the root word and have made the obvious joke about beginning to dance it. Béguines were members of an informal group of lay sisterhoods in the Netherlands, founded by Lambert Le Bègue (the stammerer) around 1170. They performed good works, but were not bound by permanent vows of poverty and chastity. They were condemned by the church in 1311, but some still exist in Belgium.

Some discs had their vital details omitted last month.

p. 20: the Pierre de la Rue/Gothic Voices is Hyperion CDA67101

p. 23: Sophie Yates Tombeau is Chandos Chaconne CHAN 0596

p. 25: Music for St Pauls (p. 25) is Hyperion CDA67009

Letters

Cher Brian,

J'ai lu la critique du CD Muffat. Merci pour les compliments. Cela fait plaisir d'avoir les réactions d'une oreille qui entend. J'ai aussi compris les critiques à propos de l'orgue concertant. Ce sera toujours le problème de savoir si on cherche à rendre exactement les intentions du compositeur ou si, dans une situation donnée (ici: faire de la musique à partir d'une tribune de Grand Orgue), on essaie d'imaginer ce qu'aurait fait le compositeur à partir de musiques déjà composées. En quelque sorte, faire ce qu'a fait Haendel toute sa vie: réutiliser des compositions en transformant une sonate en trio en concerto et un air d'opéra en pièce de clavecin. Je pense que la démarche de jouer l'oeuvre exactement telle qu'elle est écrite n'exclut pas l'autre, qui lui est complémentaire, de délivrer à la manière du compositeur à partir du texte. Là, il y a plus de risques, mais faut-il dans l'éternité de l'avenir, décliner invariablement les mêmes œuvres avec l'infime pourcentage de créativité qu'elles permettent, alors que l'introduction même de Muffat, la démarche de Bach et de Haendel (de Stanley, de Vivaldi...) nous suggèrent de nous évader de temps en temps de la rigueur d'un Urtext qui parfois n'est que la version d'un jour, différente de celle 'un autre jour ? Eternel problème de la quête du son d'origine et de la créativité à partir de ce son, de l'oeuvre, de l'esprit. Pour moi, j'ai besoin des deux démarches: d'où les *Sechs Trios für das Clavier mit der Violine* de Bach joués à l'orgue (Accord: le connais-tu ?), l'improvisation d'un Grand Jeu à la Marchand sur mon premier CD *Tempéraments* (Brossard: Messe de Noël), la reconstitution de concertos pour orgue de Bach (*Calliope*...). Ceci pour dire que, si on se place du côté de l'exigence quelque peu intégriste de retrouver l'oeuvre telle qu'elle est écrite, je suis conscient que mes concerti de Muffat sont une extrapolation fantaisiste. Mais je revendique cette fantaisie comme étant, à l'occasion, nécessaire à l'oeuvre, à l'orgue, et à la pratique de la musique ancienne en général. Le retour à la version du compositeur est généralement vivifié par cette expérience (c'est le cas, particulièrement, des *Trios* ou *Sonates* de Bach pour clavier et violon, où l'expérience de l'orgue est particulièrement éclairante et inspirante pour une restitution au clavecin).

Martin Gester

Martin also pointed out that the names of the players are listed in the booklet: apologies from Brian.

Dear Clifford,

You do well to point out the familiar words *Quis dabit capit meo* in the Huelgas lament. A few years ago I enjoyed copying out four or five later settings, noting the slight variants of wording in other settings of similar laments by later composers. But you overlooked two problems with this marvelous disc. Someone (not Paul Hillier) incorrectly attributed the lament of the swan to Abelard. No, this is an

anonymous piece, previously recorded by Studio der frühen Musik. *Plange Castella*, one of the Huelgas laments, is unaccountably sung only partway, stopping in mid-sentence. Consequently the English translation as printed is erroneous. The concluding part of the text as sung, *Casum tuum considera, Patrem plangens [in filio]* is rendered 'grieving for the Father' instead of 'Consider your fate, the father mourning [for his son]'. Three more lines are also omitted. Other recordings by Sequentia, New London Consort and Jose Luis Ochoa de Olza will confirm this. Jerome F. Weber

The danger of reviewing without checking the score! I am now less assiduous in hunting editions when listening to anthologies than I used to be. Someone evidently lost the second page of a photocopy of Plange Castella, since Patrem plangens ends p. 119 of CMM 79, vol. 2. The remaining lines (on p. 120) are:

in filio,

Qui etate tam tenera,

Concuso regni solio,

Cedes sentit et vulnera.

CB

Dear Clifford,

I am pleased you received a response to the publication of 'He that hath my commandments'. Roger Bowers puts a good case for the composer's name being Richard rather than Thomas Coste (or Cost or Coast). I asked my colleague David Smith to look over the parts on a microfilm of the original MS and we both agree with Roger about the quality of the anthem. I am glad Roger implicitly agrees with me that 'Save me, O God' is also by Coste, not Byrd. A few years ago I requested from Durham Cathedral Library photocopies of all of the material by Coste in their collection. This seems to be the only source apart from those relating to the anthems, and it contains fragments of liturgical settings for the Anglican rite. None can be reconstructed and although the composer's surname is given, no Christian name or initial is mentioned, merely the title 'Mr'.

This still leaves Myriell, as Roger says, alone in providing the Christian name Thomas. If Coste's Christian name really should be Richard, as Roger persuasively suggests, perhaps the otherwise accurate Myriell, not knowing Coste's Christian name or being uncertain, muddled him up with Thomas Caustun. Meanwhile perhaps King's Music edition of the anthem should attribute it to 'Richard (?) Coste', c.1535 - c.1597.

Richard Turbet

We were suspicious about the accidentals in the Drexel MS. We wondered whether there were two scribal layers there, but it was impossible to judge this from the photocopies Richard gave Brian to work from or the film I happened to have. Since the accidentals were confirmed by the single part in BL 29289, I decided to make the facts correspond with the style of the surviving sources rather than recreate a more archaic style.

CB

Dear Mr Bartlett,

I am happy to renew my subscription to *EMR* and, now in my 91st year, I am tempted (or am I tempting Providence?) to look upon it as a life membership fee! I suppose I must be the oldest murderer alive of the bass viol taking your periodical, and I don't mind if Dr. John Catch knows it!

By the same token I have no immediate or foreseeable need of international or domestic information re. festivals, summer schools and the like and if dropping future enclosures will peg back postage to 30p. I'd rather your organisation enjoyed the balance.

Anent the indigence of musical qualifications (*EMR* 42), I doubt not that colleges in *EMR* mailing will be begging acceptance of honorary degrees.

May you and your family enjoy a happy August furlough.

Frank Fordham

We are grateful for the many kindly comments we receive at renewal time. We hope younger subscribers are finding the diary useful; compiling it is an additional chore, but as was said when it was introduced, we use it ourselves & are pleased to see that so many of our editions are being used across the world.

The price will have to rise eventually. Even though we work on a shoestring budget, there are printing costs to cover and our increased postal costs are considerable (we were not surprised to hear that the Post Office made it's greatest ever profit this year). We will keep the subscription rate until the end of this year & anticipate an increase from Feb. 1999 onwards.

We don't want to labour the point, but we believe that the our reviewers have apposite views (our readers too, for that matter) regardless of their musical/academic qualifications. We were delighted to hear that one reader has at last gained academic recognition when Cambridge University belatedly agreed to acknowledge it's pre-1948 women graduates. Congratulations to Alison Bagenal

We are always pleased to receive comments from customers. Those from Helge Therkildsen always delight us. We are not sure whether his turn of phrase derives from his literary skill or from the idiom of the Danish language. We have left Martin Gester's letter in French: we assume that, like us, many readers who have difficulty in speaking foreign languages can generally make sense of the written word. So do write to us, whether in idiosyncratic English or your own language: even if CB or EB do not understand them, BC almost certainly will. EB

Dear Clifford Bartlett.

(These remarks are written from the heart without a dictionary - I hope they are understandable)

In a review of Buxtehude's *Membra Jesu Nostri* you mentioned the possibility that this concerto cycle was meant to be performed one to a part. I agree, and there is a performance

in this way: *Concerto Vocale* on *harmonia mundi* HMC 901333.

The second issue concerns the non-vibrato performance of Tchaikovsky. How I would love to hear one. But in my opinion we must not ask modern orchestras to play like that. When I played the modern bassoon, conductors (often choral conductors interested in historically-oriented performances) asked our strings to let off the vibrato when we played Bach. The result was poor. I think modern strings loose too much sound without vibrato. The type of strings and construction give no real basic sound. They are built to tremble.

Helge Therkildsen

Dear Bartlett Family,

We presently reside as Gentiles among the 'Saints' in a little Mormon settlement located in the high desert of south-eastern Idaho. This possibly qualifies us as your most isolated subscribers. Here, early music consists of frontier ballads, Indian 'chant' and the maudlin contents of Emma Smith's hymnal. Our remote location and the odd demographics of our region only add to our appreciation of your informed audio reviews, since recordings provide our only means of listening. Regarding the tantalizing listings of live performances in the UK, they've driven us both quite literally to tears as we've nothing of that sort available here... Thanks for a very helpful helpful and informative newsletter, a veritable lifeline to those of us languishing in exile.

Randall & Bonnie Laviolette

Our most remote customer is in Alice Springs, but he doesn't subscribe. Shelley must be small, since it isn't in any of the guidebooks we collected in anticipation of a trip to the area this month before the favourable exchange rate enticed us to Australia instead. Idaho may be a cultural desert, but it does have the Yellowstone National Park and other natural attractions within reach.

We were amused by a review of a concert given by Richard Neville-Towle and his ensemble Ludus Baroque in Glasgow recently. The writer, Wilma Paterson, complained that there were not many laughs in the first half and objected to Carissimi's *Jephthe* being preceded by a Dario Castello sonata. Unless the performance was really bad, there should have been humour, at least, in the Castello. Monteverdi may, as she wrote, have stood 'head and shoulders above the other composers in the programme'. But he didn't write any instrumental music, and Castello's quirky but brilliant sonatas are a stimulating substitute. She evidently failed to hear the point of Peter Philips' setting of Caccini's *Amarilli mia bella*, based on the song which stands near the beginning of most collections of *Arie antiche* from which singing students used to learn *bel canto* (and probably still do). The 'faintly insipid' Frescobaldi organ piece was a setting of a popular tune, *Girometta*, intended to tease the listener's expectation of sober Frescobaldian counterpoint. One hopes a critic will appreciate such planning, even if the performances might not have worked for her. CB