

Early Music

REVIEW

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John Mansfield Thomson

It is very sad to record the death of John Thomson, for many years better-known in England than in his native New Zealand. More recently, when he returned to live here, he made a significant impact as a writer, scholar, critic and lecturer. We visited him just before we departed to England in July 1998. He had just moved into his new flat in a particularly nice part of Wellington, within walking distance of shops and cafes, bus routes, close to town. By the time we returned here, twelve months later, he had become ill. I rang him just after he had come home from a spell in hospital. He sounded cheerful, a little soft-voiced, but his normal self. We went away for a three-week tour, heard that he had gone back to hospital, and, several days before our return, learned of his passing.

His funeral was held in the magnificent Victorian 'gothic' wooden church of Old St Paul's in Wellington. The repertoire performed bore witness to John's wide interests. Singers sang, in turn, Purcell and Richard Strauss, the New Zealand String Quartet played Beethoven, pianist Margaret Nielson played Douglas Lilburn, two of New Zealand's best-known poets, Vince O'Sullivan and Lauris Edmond, spoke and read poems, a Tallis Scholars' recording of Brumel was played, and there were tributes from friends and family. A large gathering demonstrated that John's qualities were indeed recognised at home, something that I am pleased to report he did realise.

He is perhaps best-known to the readers of this journal as the founding editor of *Early Music* and several books, the most recent of which was the Cambridge Companion to the Recorder. To New Zealanders he was known as the author of the *Oxford History of New Zealand Music*, a ground-breaking work which, like all his books, was enjoyable to read, scholarly, detailed, a very human history. The Victoria University of Wellington conferred an honorary doctorate on him in 1991, and lists him among its 'great graduates'. There are countless New Zealand musicians who found in him, in London, and latterly in Wellington, a friend and mentor, an invaluable source of advice, guidance, and marvellous company. He had covered all the concerts during the Wellington Festival of Early Music, held in our sometimes merciless month of May, worrying his friends who knew how trying he could find the cold and often violent weather of the Wellington winter. His determined support perhaps brought on the attacks which heralded his final illness. He will be as deeply mourned in England as he is here in New Zealand. *Robert Oliver*

I associate him chiefly with *Early Music*, for which all involved in early music must be grateful, and early meetings of the NEMA Council (initially very much his organisation, with which he never lost touch). I was intrigued to find that in 1964 he had designed the logo of a magazine for music librarians, BRIO, which I later edited for about ten years. I am glad that my last memory is of him on his home ground, braving the early-spring winds at Robert's favourite viewpoint of Wellington Harbour and the Cook Straits.

CB

BOOKS & MUSIC

Clifford Bartlett

BYZANTINE COMMUNION

The Communion Chants of the Thirteenth-Century Byzantine Asmatikon edited by Simon Harris (Music Archive Publications). Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999. xiv + 166pp, £28.00

I wonder how far beyond the Western European tradition the term 'early music' is relevant. When the Arts Council was insisting that a fixed proportion of any grant be spent on non-Western music, I considered using some of the Early Music Centre budget on a concert of early Japanese music – but that wouldn't have counted, not so much on general principles as because they wanted music of resident non-Western groups. Is Byzantine music any closer to our musical experience than that of Japan? Histories of music do their duty by it and usually squeeze in a chapter between ancient music and Gregorian chant, as if it was part of a historical progression; Eastern church music then disappears from the narrative. There was, of course, influence from the east to the west, but the traditions mostly existed in parallel, and we cannot assume that the Byzantine music that survives is of any greater antiquity than Western chant. The sources of the music edited here, for instance, date from after 1200, although the editor sees signs within the repertoire that it had existed for some time before then, and the texts themselves date from between 800 and 1050. The Greek tradition should be studied for its own sake than for its occasional influence on the West.

The Asmatikon is one of four chant repertoires of the period before 1300, the others being the Sticherion, the Heirmologion and the Psaltikon. The last of these contains music for soloists, while the Asmatikon has music of some degree of elaboration for skilled choral singers. This volume contains transcriptions of the 64 Communion chants, in some cases with alternative versions given in parallel; simpler variants are listed in the commentary. Modern notation is used, with the original neums copied above. Underlay is in Greek script, with the 'corrupt' orthography uncorrected, and no attempt to link syllables into words. The texts are set out as normal Greek in the commentary, with translations added. The musical pages are in the editor's non-professional but clear hand. I must confess to having no expertise in the subject, but this is clearly a publication of importance in Byzantine studies. At some stage, wearing my PMMS hat, I was supposed to have had something to do with producing it, so I am particularly glad that Harwood have taken it over. If other volumes in the series can mop up editions like this that deserve publication but do not fit the programmes of existing series and issue them at such a reasonable price, they will be doing the musical world a great service.

VENETIAN PRINTERS

Richard J. Agee *The Gardano Music Printing Firms* (Eastman Studies in Music, 11) University of Rochester Press, 1998. xii + 502pp, £65.00

Jane A. Bernstein *Music Printing in Renaissance Venice: The Scotto Press (1539-1572)*. Oxford UP, 1998. xix + 1175pp, £155.00 ISBN 0 19 510231 2

What a coincidence that these two thorough bibliographical studies of the Italian centre of 16th-century music publishing, Venice, should appear in such proximity. Bernstein's massive volume is mostly catalogue and index, but begins with a 214-page historical study; Agee's introductory text covers 148 smaller pages. Both have vast amounts of information on the music-publishing trade yet manage to avoid duplication. Agee is more interested in wider economic matters, and seems less involved in the meticulous study of the publications themselves. Indeed, I suspect that he has handled far fewer of the volumes he lists than Bernstein has. He also supplies much less information in his catalogue (which, to be fair, he calls a checklist): title, format, RISM reference, date of earlier or later edition, and locations. After seven introductory chapters, he devotes three chapters to the Gardano family business, taking the history of the firm from the death of Antonio Gardano; two further chapters deal with the publications themselves. The output, mostly non-musical, of Alessandro Gardano, who left the family firm in 1575, are listed separately and more briefly: they begin with two Jewish works and a medical book by Falloppio (of tube fame). Another pair of appendices deals with the famous 1591 Gardano *Indice delli libri di musica*, attempting to identify the items and then arranging them in chronological order: some date back to the 1540s, which suggests that the Gardano warehouse must have been capacious, sturdy and dry. (You can't store books in Venetian basements or ground floors, but books in bulk can cause structural damage on upper floors.) The lack of detailed information on the make-up and content of each publication is disappointing, especially in contrast with Bernstein and with Mary S. Lewis's study of the earlier history of the firm. But it is nevertheless a fine study, whose chapters on the book trade and production are of great interest. One tiny stylistic matter: too many sentences begin with 'too' meaning 'also'; I don't know about American English, but over here such usage would be corrected by the copy editor.

Bernstein's work begins with the earlier history of the Scotto family, who were in the book trade before Girolamo embarked on music in 1539. His uncle Ottaviano had been the first Italian to use movable type for music in a missal of 1482. His nephews took over the firm at his death in 1498.

One of them was linked with Petrucci, and in the 1530s another was involved with Andrea Antico's musical activities. From 1539 Scotto and Gardano dominated Venetian music printing: the degree to which they were rivals is a matter for caution, since their piracy of each other's output should not be exaggerated.

Bernstein's introduction is substantial enough to be a book in its own right, with much information on how the music trade worked and its relationship to composers and the public. The core of the book is the thorough description of 409 musical publications. There is detailed information about the physical make-up of each volume, its typography and paper, and the complete contents are also listed, together with references to standard modern editions. All incipits are indexed. One appendix lists chronologically all the Venetian music prints of the period, with a column for Scotto, another for Gardano and, from 1557, a third containing the small output of others, chiefly Rampazetto and Merulo. Dedicatees are indexed, as are contemporary volumes made up by binding together various different works. 404 non-musical publications by Scotto from this period receive a brief listing: they are mainly Latin works on science, theology, philosophy and law, with a particular emphasis on Aristotle. This is a magnificent volume, probably too expensive and esoteric for readers to buy for themselves, but one to be aware of and consult in the library (most libraries are too possessive of bibliographic works to let you take them away). Since a delight of bibliographers is noting misprints to identify issues, it is nice that there is an example here: page 118 comes to an abrupt end.

ENGLISH COURT THEATRE

John H. Astington *English Court Theatre 1558-1642*. Cambridge UP, 1999. ISBN 0 521 64065 2

When Cambridge UP send their new book catalogue round, I generally look beyond the music section. So last month I was able to draw our readers' attention to a useful survey of the troubadours, and this month we have a book that is primarily of concern to literary scholars but whose wider audience should include musicians. The thorough index gives 21 references to *music* (commendably including an illustration which includes musicians but does not mention them in the caption – something most indexes would ignore) and another to *music house*. But the main value is not so much in the specific comments as for the background to the royal entertainment that had music as an integral part, the masque. This places it among the other theatrical activities of court and makes it less isolated than it often seems to those of us who think of it primarily from a musical perspective. An appendix lists all play and masque performances at court from 1558 to 1642. Not all plays had the obsequious content of the masque: *Measure for Measure*, *Othello* and *King Lear* were all seen at court while they were new – can one imagine our present royals seeking out such avant-garde fare? If readers ever need to erect authentic audience tiers, you will need to read this.

PRB VIOLS

Resting from his labours with Telemann cantatas, Peter Ballinger has issued four more viol publications. Rita Morey has edited an *In nomine* a6 by George Gill for TrTrTTBB. Gill, an instrument maker, must be one of the most obscure composers to achieve a modern edition; his only other known work is an *In nomine* a5. His music (from the John Browne partbooks, 1633) looks well-written – avoiding, for instance, too systematic a series of entries of the opening point and providing considerable rhythmic interest. (PRB Viol Consort Series 23; \$5.50)

Six Ayres for lyra viol with bass accompaniment by Christopher Simpson come from the appendix to the 1678 edition of his *Compendium of Practical Musick*, where they form the third group of pieces (nos 35-40 in the VdG Society list): at least, that is the source the editor, Joëlle Morton, has used, but they are also in the 1665 edition entitled *The Principles of Practical Musick* (though not in the other printings). The two early editions seem close enough, but the textual commentary really should have collated both sources. The music is presumably intended to be instructional, but is quite difficult for a ten-year-old boy (that was the age of the dedicatee, John St. Barbe, in 1665). The edition follows the original by being in tablature, with the bass in staff-notation. An additional copy gives a transcription in small print with the bass full-size, a sensible arrangement. (PRB Viol Consort Series 37; \$6.00)

21 *Airs and Dances* for two (equal) bass viols by William Young are edited by Stephen Morris, primarily from the only complete source in Durham. There are three suites, in g, d and G, with a final allemande in d; none of the pieces have titles, but they are mostly allemandes, courantes or sarabandes, with an opening pavan, which is given double bars but not repeat marks: is that significant? It would be interesting for the players to swap parts at repeats; the Durham MS is a score, so would permit it, but the other source (Ob Mus.Sch F.573) contains a single part, so cannot have been treated thus. The edition is in score, but in two versions, each with one part in large print, the other on small. Both parts require more skill from the performer than the lyra part of the Christopher Simpson (PRB Viol Consort Series 38; \$20.00)

Finally we move to Belgium (to use an unhistorical term) for Philip Hacquart's *Complete Works* for solo gamba, edited by the leading continental gamba scholar, François-Pierre Goy, who supplies a more substantial introduction than the items mentioned above. Philip (1645-91) was the younger brother of the better-known Carel; his only surviving music comprises four suites (in d, d, D and a), each in four movements (Allemande, Courante, Sarabande and Gigue), plus two more pieces surviving in versions for violin but presented here for viol. This is pleasing music for the solitary violist, though I'm not sure if I would want to hear more than one suite in any single concert or recording. (PRB Baroque Music Series 17; \$10.00)

BUXTEHUDE

Dietrich Buxtehude *Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Orgelwerke IV... Choralbearbeitungen... A-Me* (BuxWV 177-206) herausgegeben von... Christoph Albrecht. Bärenreiter (BA 8404), 1998. vii + 89pp, £22.50.

Dietrich Buxtehude *Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Orgelwerke V... Choralbearbeitungen... Mi-W* (BuxWV 76, 207-224) herausgegeben von... Christoph Albrecht. Bärenreiter (BA 8405), 1998. 82pp, £22.50.

In my younger days, the only Buxtehude edition one could buy here came from a Danish publisher, though the edition I used was the old Spitta/Seiffert of 1904 – which, as the result of war losses, is the only source for a few of the settings. Now there is competition between the two major German publishers, Breitkopf and Bärenreiter. I find myself at a disadvantage in that I only have the first two of the Breitkopf volumes at hand (cf *EMR* 38, pp. 5-6), not the two with the chorale settings (EB 6663-4), so can only say that at DM42.00 each the pricing favours Breitkopf. The Bärenreiter volumes are treated as a pair, with the introduction and list of sources only included in vol. 4 – it is a pity that one of the blank pages of vol. 5 isn't used to reprint the latter to make the commentary self-sufficient. The chorale settings appear in alphabetical order, which is how they are arranged in BuxWV (the Buxtehude thematic catalogue). Editing Buxtehude must be frustrating in that all of the sources (with the exception mentioned below) are secondary, are often inconsistent when there are more than one for any piece, and use staff notation instead of the tablature that the composer would have used. The player is more dependent on the editor's judgment than, say, in much of Bach's music. So duplication of editions is no bad thing and players should be stimulated by the differences (though it is a pity that the major sources are not available in facsimile). Fortunately, there are fewer problems in these volumes, since the writing is generally strictly in parts, so the translation from composer's mind to tablature and then to staff notation was less complex than with the free works. Editorial intrusion beyond the necessary interpretation of the sources is minimal except for the quoting of modern chorale titles and occasionally adding manual indications in square brackets extending the practice of sources of marking R (for *Rückpositiv*) and O (*Orgel* or *Oberwerk*). It is a pity that organists do not now read the alto clef: the middle stave in Spitta's edition often looks much better balanced.

The one piece for which there is an authoritative source is *Mit Fried und Freud*, published in memory of Buxtehude's father in 1674. The format – four staves in SATB clefs – is not preserved here. It is probably not an organ piece anyway, so should perhaps have been placed in the appendix along with the *Klaglied* for the same occasion, both of which are notated with one part underlaid with a three-part textless accompaniment. The *Klaglied* is given just one stanza: the other six could have been put on the blank columns at the end of the commentary. That quibble apart, this is an edition which organists can use with ease and confidence.

PERFORMERS' FACSIMILES & FUZEAU

Shortage of space has squashed out mention of new issues in this series over the past few months. *Madrigals of 5. and 6. parts, apt for the Viols and voices* (PF 190; £37.50) by Thomas Weelkes (1600) coincidentally arrived just after I made a trip to the British Library to check *Thule the period of Cosmographie*: strange that viols are mentioned before voices. The Vivaldi Flute Concertos op. 10 (PF203; £42.50) are smarter than ours, but for £30.00 we include a second *Organo e Violoncello* part; we will stock both versions.

There is no shortage of facsimiles of Corelli's op. 5, the violin sonatas. The one I keep in stock is from SPES, which is of the Rome edition of 1700 with a reduced-size version of the 1710 Amsterdam edition 'ou l'on a joint les agrèemens des Adagio de cet ouvrage, composez par M^r Corelli comme il les joue' (whose authenticity is, of course, a matter of dispute). Performers' Facsimiles have reprinted the Amsterdam edition (from a later copy, since the title page has a serial number added) at full size, so is easier to read if it is the embellishments that you want. It has the whole of the Amsterdam edition; SPES only includes nos 1-6, since 7-12 are unadorned. SPES has the price advantage (about £12.00, whereas PF231 is £21.00).

The so-called first set of Paris Quartets (originally published as *Quadri* in Hamburg in 1730 and reprinted in Paris in 1738) is reproduced from the latter (PF223; £37.50; the 'second' set, first published in Paris, is PF224; £42.50). I'm not sure what the rival versions from Mieroprint now costs; each set was under £30.00 a few years ago, and the DM and Euro have fallen since then. But the PF edition is easier to use with the parts placed more generously on the page, and folded and stapled rather than ring-bound. The first set is the one with two concertos, two sonatas and two suites; the second set (*Nouveau quatuors*) just has six quartets. Another version from Fuzeau of the first set uses the c. 1740 reprint, and at about £20.00 is cheaper than the others. You don't get the generous margins of PF, but otherwise there are no problems, except a fear (probably unfounded) that there may have been some slips in the reprint. Sensibly, Fuzeau hasn't followed its 'clean-up' policy so that a missing *allegro* that someone wrote in to the first line of the continuo part has been allowed to remain. Both sets are essential equipment for anyone who can assemble a violin, flute, cello or gamba, and continuo.

A more recent batch includes one of the few Geminiani prints that King's Music does not have: *The Art of Playing Guitar or Cittra*, published in Edinburgh in 1760 (PF216; £17.00). There is just one page of text, mostly devoted to explaining the tablature, for an instrument tuned CEGCEG. The music is printed on three staves. The first, labelled *violino*, is basically the same as the second, *Chitarra o Cetra*, except that the latter is in tablature; the third stave is a figured bass heading *Violoncello e Cembalo*. There are 11 *Examples*, progressing through the keys: CcDdEeFfGgA (a selection that is more systematic than practical), each

consisting of scales (made musical by some rhythmic variation and the accompaniment) and moving onto more elaborate music. Probably rather a rapid introduction for the beginner by modern standards!

Jean Barrière is best known for his four books of fine cello music (which Alain Gervreau has been recording and of which we have produced facsimiles). His *Livre V* comprises five suites for the pardessus, which appear in adaptations for the harpsichord in *Livre VI* (PF232; £14.50). This dates from 1738, and was engraved by Mrs Le Clair in a very compressed style to avoid page-turns. There is also a sixth sonata, along with five independent pieces. As with the cello books, the music is quite virtuosic, more directed towards an audience than much French keyboard music of the period. More easily approachable, and more relaxed in appearance as well as style, are the two books by Jean François Dandrieu, the *Premier Livre de Pièces de Clavecin* of 1724 (PF165; £21.00) and the *Second Livre* of 1728, (PF166; £14.50). The former has a brief introduction and table of ornaments, and includes several of what the composer calls *divertissements*, such as the extended group of Battle pieces that ends the first Suite.

There have been a couple of new batches from Fuzeau since I last mentioned them. The French small-scale motet is a genre worth discovering (witness the marvellous music on the recent Campra disc from Canzona reviewed last month), so the *Motets à une, deux, et trois voix avec Symphonie et sans Symphonie... Second oeuvre... 1713* by Bernier (his first set had been published ten years earlier and is already available as No. 1020) are of considerable interest. It is a big collection (192 pp), and is good value at about £30.00 (No. 5753. Prices are only approximate, and refer to the UK, where one doesn't have to pay French VAT.) There are seven motets for soprano (C1 clef), two of which have a single violin (or flute) part; two for *haute-contre* (C3 clef), one with violin; two for bass, of which one has two violins or flutes (*Judica me Deus*: it looks particularly interesting); two for two sopranos; one for soprano and bass; and a trio for two sopranos and bass. The facsimile needs some skill in clef-reading, but is otherwise clearly legible.

Another of Fuzeau's collections of Vivaldi chamber music offers facsimiles of five pieces including flute, oboe and bassoon, RV 88, 90, 98, 99 & 107 (No. 5682; about £21). Of these, RV 88 and 107 are autograph, the others copies with Vivaldi's writing on them. All can be read without the slightest difficulty (though one hopes that nothing of value has disappeared with the cleaning of the master-copy). An early set of parts from Dresden is also included for RV 107: it would have been helpful if their title pages had stated the concerto number to avoid disappointing any who may assume that all five pieces are included. We are told that marks other than in the hand of the original scribe have been removed: it would be comforting to know what they were. There are two titled, so well-known, pieces here, *Il Gardellino* and *Tempesta di Mare*, which exist in orchestral versions as op. 10/3 & 1: the introduction misprints them

both as op. 10/3. In the case of RV 98, it is possible to see on the autograph signs indicating changes for an orchestral version. RV 99 has several cuts marked, which the introduction does not mention. It would be nice to know if more recent scholarly opinion has refined Ryom's uncertainty who made them. Fuzeau's series of Vivaldi facsimiles is most welcome, and if you play these works, use the facsimile scores rather than modern ones.

REJOICE!

Gaudete! Medieval Songs and Carols for upper voices... edited by Jeremy Summerly. (Choral Programme Series). Faber Music, 1999. 31pp, £3.95

Another of Faber's well-edited, imaginative and cheap series of choral repertoire, with the advantage of the pages not being so crammed as in most others I have seen. Jeremy Summerly's interest in carols for upper voices was shown in his Naxos *Piae Cantiones* recording, about which I had some reservations (*EMR* 49, p. 19). But this edition, which takes six of its thirteen pieces from that source, is certainly welcome. The editor has arranged it so that it can be performed as a single programme, but it is perfectly adaptable for other purposes. Including general Marian pieces, seven are suitable for Christmas, and the others are more or less religious (*Tempus adest floridum* is an almost secular spring song); the Agincourt carol is patriotic rather than sacred, despite the *Deo gratias*! It is nice to see note-values longer than usual, with the minim the basic note-length rather than crotchet (just like the hymnbooks of our youth). Five items are monophonic, as are the verses of the title song.

I'm not convinced by the fancy barring of *Personent hodie*; the word stress and implied rhythm of the music are so contradictory that the barring everyone knows from Holst (along with the extra note he added – at the end of the line in the 1582 print, so an understandable omission) is better than changing from two to three beats per bar. Sharpening the third chord of *Gaudete* seems odd: it's nowhere near a cadence. Compasses seem a bit high. I don't want to bore readers with the female tenor topic again, but I reckon that *There is no rose* with F# at the top and A at the bottom is going to sound less comfortable than down a tone or two, and a fifth below middle C is manageable for altos if they are encouraged to use their low notes (see p. 30). But I don't want to make tiny criticisms. This is a useful volume for female or children's choirs, well produced, with good music and a variety of texture – very important in high-voice concerts. Is a piano reduction really necessary for three-part pieces? What do they teach pianists these days?

New from King's Music

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John Blow *New Year Ode, 1700*

PERKINS' RENAISSANCE

Clifford Bartlett

Leeman L. Perkins *Music in the Age of the Renaissance*. Norton, 1999. xviii + 1147pp, £33.00.

As promised last month, I took this away on holiday and read it in transit to and at various non-musicological theme parks in Florida. (A musicological theme-park – that's an idea to put Florida Southern College at Lakeland on the map! It would make a fitting use for Frank Lloyd Wright's buildings.) Consequently I was not able to check details while reading it, and the sheet of paper I was using as a bookmark and for making notes was quickly filled. I should perhaps have had Allan Atlas's *Renaissance Music* (Norton, 1998) with me for comparison. I found that imaginative (see *EMR* 41 p. 2), with an intriguing and stimulating form. It seems slightly odd for the same publisher to be issuing a work with so similar a title, and not advertising the Atlas book on the cover (or even including it in the bibliography): does Norton comprise two opposing factions? I don't know the relevant ages of Atlas and Perkins, both of whom published significant editions of chansonniers in the 1970s, but Perkins' book has a slightly staid and old-fashioned feel to it. His opening section – five introductory chapters – is a great asset, but also an intense frustration, since it is page 212 before one gets to the beginning of his musical-historical narrative, and even that starts with five pages of English history. I wonder whether this material, together with a much more thorough discussion of the Roman liturgy, might have made a separate volume, on the analogy of the 17th and 18th-century background books by Basil Willey that were required reading for Eng. Lit students in my youth. Curiously, the musical discussion is not related particularly closely to the introductory topics.

A good feature of the book is that it focuses on the difference between the characteristic ways in which motets, masses, hymns, psalms and magnificats were each set. But much of the argument could have been simplified if the reader had been clearly told that the latter three categories, when sung to chant, all involved alternation of verses between the two sides of the choir. This procedure continued with polyphonic setting, and could be discussed just once, with subsequent notice only being made when there were exceptions. *Alternatim* organ settings also belong to the same context, and consideration of them should lead to a discussion on pitch, a topic which Perkins entirely neglects, not even giving original clefs in his music examples – essential information for relating notes to sound in at least the latter part of the period covered.

A liturgical point that is touched upon chiefly in connection with the *motetti missales* is the relationship between what is sung and the liturgical text. He doesn't draw the parallel

with the 17th-century practice of vocal or instrumental pieces as substitutes for antiphons, as is familiar from controversy on Monteverdi's 1610 Vespers. I was less explicit than I should have been in my review of Richard Sherr's *Music and Musicians in Renaissance Rome...* (*EMR* 52, p. 2). He states that, at Papal mass, the Pope should have finished saying the Creed by the time the choir reaches 'Et incarnatus est'. One presumes that the Papal utterance is of greater significance than that of the choir, so the whole choral performance of the mass might be considered to be a mass substitute, with the implication that the complete statement of the text in the vocal setting is not a liturgical requirement: there is nothing improper in 15th-century settings with parts of the text omitted or, for that matter, Haydn's squashing the whole text onto two pages by having each part sing different phrases at the same time.

Humanism is a topic covered in the introductory chapters, but is not linked to the change of attitude to word setting during the period. Perkins is very concerned with the way musical phrases relate to lines of verse (though his language is confusing: *verse* may be used in English to mean a single line of Italian poetry, but in relationship to English poetry it is synonymous with *stanza*). But the greater precision in the notation of underlay as the period progresses is not just a matter of scribes and printers becoming more helpful but because composers were more concerned with expressing the rhythmic vitality of the words themselves. In his discussion of the English *a cappella* heresy, Perkins suggests that voices can be used instrumentally (but throughout the book tediously points out that untexted parts are probably instrumental, when silence would be more tactful); contrariwise, Ganassi (a significant name not in the index) argues that an instrument can pronounce words. The crucial point is that, as a result of humanistic concepts of the primacy of language (which underlies both reformation and counter-reformation arguments about polyphony), most 16th-century music springs from the words, irrespective of any formal structure they and it may have.

The arrangement of the book is well-judged, and it is useful that most chapters are quite self-sufficient (at the expense of a degree of repetition). But there are several limitations. The author is too ready to write about what can be written about easily and avoids looking at the music as a whole. It is easy enough to point out a cantus firmus, but far more difficult to explain why a composer chose one pattern of notes rather than another in the freely-composed parts. The approach is generally melodic: avoidance of tonic-dominant harmonic vocabulary is, of course, understandable, but there is little to replace it. One change through the period is the way music becomes more and more controlled by

alternations of suspension and resolution (Tallis's Canon could not have been written a century earlier). The topic only occurs in the appendix, as a technical matter, not part of the historical narrative.

I suspect that our readers will quickly turn to the chapter *Performance Practice and Instrumental Music*. It is astonishing that there is no mention of the 1539 and 1589 *intermedi*, which offer so much evidence, both practical and symbolic, and little is drawn from the information on the 1568 Munich wedding (dated thus on p. 929, but 1569 on p. 928). Regrettably, the discussion does not get beyond whether to use instruments or not: other aspects of performance are ignored. We are told of the change from harmony based on fifths to harmony based on thirds and sixths. This causes a fundamental difference in tuning (see, for instance, the comments by Rogers Covey-Crump in the booklets with the Hilliard Live recordings), and hence the sound of music, but such matters are confined to the appendix, divorced from any relationship with actual music. Similarly, there is discussion there of the proportions, but not on the degree of flexibility within the performance. Music is presented very much as notes on the page, not something to experience as sound.

Sometimes more interest is shown in the birth and early life of a form/style/medium than its maturity. There are various examples of early lute music quoted, but Francesco da Milano is allocated less than one line of text. Italian keyboard music of the latter part of the 16th century is ignored. Other music falls through the cracks. Why is so much space devoted to the short secular carols of King Henry VIII's MS (BL add. 31922) but no mention made of the more serious carols, e.g. the settings of *Wofffully araid* by Cornysh and Browne, in the Fayrfax MS (add. 5465)? The English votive antiphon, which offers some of the most exciting and largest-scale music of the 16th century, is not singled out as a characteristic form. There is nothing sensible on music that is large vertically rather than horizontally – polychoral music – except not very coherently in connection with a Palestrina motet. (The usual mention of Venice occurs, but the Willaert-type psalms derive from normal alternating psalm chanting, which ironically in San Marco did not involve spatial separation). Striggio's 40-part motet is from the 1560s, and Padovano's mass a24 was probably written for the 1568 Munich wedding; *Spem in alium* also dates from round about then: ideal material for an author interested in beginnings!

The sections involving instruments are the weakest in the book: a common trait of more traditional musicological writing, as testified by the disappointing book by that otherwise distinguished scholar, Howard Mayer Brown, on *intermedi* instrumentation (not mentioned in Perkins' bibliography). Dance music is discussed with no mention of the dances as physical movements with their own demands on the music. The reader would not guess that Renaissance dance is widely practised and has generated a considerable amount of scholarship relevant to musicians.

I'm puzzled for whom this book is intended. It is fluently written, and the isolation of much of the technical matter in a ninety-page appendix may make it helpful to enthusiasts who enjoy singing, playing and listening to music of the period. But at nearly 2kg it is extremely heavy to carry and really needs a desk, which will exclude its use by those who read in the train, by the fire, or in bed. A volume of *The New Grove* is only a couple of hundred grams lighter but has a more comfortable centre of gravity. The reader is assumed to have at hand both *The New Grove* and *The Census Catalogue of Manuscript Sources of Polyphonic Music*. I have the former at least within reach of my desk, but not the latter; for many of the sources mentioned, I have fuller information at hand than that Catalogue gives, in some cases even complete facsimiles or editions, but Perkins often does not mention them. I also find it irritating that my reading is continually interrupted by footnotes that tell me merely that a piece of information is taken from New Grove. At least they really are footnotes, but they break the flow of reading. Surely all that is needed is an introductory bibliographical note referring the reader to New Grove for such matters (though it is helpful to be referred to some articles in New Grove that are not obvious: places, poets, etc). On the other hand, more help could be given to aid the reader find editions ('in modern score', to use the invariable expression here). Chapter 20 begins with a mention of the Fayrfax, Ritson and Henry VIII manuscripts. We immediately get four references to the *Census-Catalogue* with later references to *Musica Britannica* 18 & 47, but no statement that these are complete editions of the Henry VIII and Fayrfax MSS. There is no mention of the standard book on the subject, John Stevens' *Music & Poetry in the Early Tudor Court*, which does not appear in the bibliography. That, however, is cluttered up with innumerable references to individual articles in New Grove listed under their authors. Surely this is taking the cult of personality too far? The bibliographical apparatus is of far less help to the reader than it should be.

A book of this size is likely to suffer from a few inconsistencies. A notable one is the new information about Josquin in (or rather not in) Milan, which is incorporated on page 430, although *Ave Maria... virgo serena* is still placed in his non-existent Milanese period in the 1470s on p. 514. (Incidentally, there is a later reference to the homophony-with-one-part-displaced of the 'Ave vera virginitas' section that needs a forward reference.) If Perkins is right to print the canon three notes late, not one as in other editions, the reader should be warned of the discrepancy. We have the illogical *lutanist* on page 118, but *lutenist* later (the former is in a largish Webster I found in a discount bookshop outside Tampa, but the latter is surely more logical, has better authority, and is more normal).

Returning to my opening comparison with Atlas, I have found Perkins a much less inspiring historian than Atlas, who brings the reader much closer to the music. I suspect that Perkins is better consulted a chapter or two at a time rather than read continuously: not many writers can sustain 1057 pages (less some music examples) of text.

ITALIAN PUBLICATIONS IN ENGLISH

Barbara Gogolick Sachs

Guarini, *la musica, i musicisti* edited by Angelo Pompilio (*ConNotazioni*, 3). LIM Editrice, 1997. 232pp, £60,000. ISBN 88-7096-193-1

Four of the nine studies on the musical relationships of the poetry of Battista Guarini (1538-1612), which inspired and was inspired by composers such as Marenzio, Monteverdi, D'India, Luzzaschi and Caccini, are in English:

Massimo Ossi: 'Between *madrigale* and *altro genere di canto*: Elements of ambiguity in Claudio Monteverdi's setting of Battista Guarini's *Con che soavità*.'

Tim Carter: 'New songs for old? Guarini and the monody.'

James Chater 'Un pasticcio di madrigaletti? The early musical fortune of *Il pastor fido*.'

Antonio Vassalli and Angelo Pompilio: 'Il pastor fido and music: A bibliography.' [This lists all the musical settings of Guarini and occupies 38 pages.]

Antonio Vassalli provides a history of prints of Guarini's works and Dinko Fabris reports on Guarini letters in the Bentivoglio Archive in Ferrara. As Carter addressed a musical problem, showing how solo song based on Guarini's poetry tended to take the form of aria-like madrigals instead of monody, so Paolo Cecchi provides a profound musical analysis of Marenzio's setting of the *Canzon de' baci*. Elio Durante and Anna Martellotti write on Guarini's literary output for the *Concerto delle Dame* of the Estense Court. A comparison of the versions written first to be set by Luzzaschi and later revised for print should be as illuminating to singers as to students of literature: nevertheless it must be admitted that whether in English or not, most of these studies are aimed at readers of Italian poetry.

Andrea Dell' Antonio *Syntax, Form and Genre in Sonatas and Canzonas 1621-1635* (*Quaderni di Musica/Realtà*, 38) Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1997. 308pp, £36,000 ISBN 88-7096-182-6

This is a book to be devoured and returned to by anyone interested in the instrumental music of Castello, Picchi, Scarani and Frescobaldi. It draws profound and surprising conclusions from analysis, painstakingly charted in order to ascertain whether a *canzona-sonata* genre exists. No reader of it will play or hear this music as before. It also contains over a dozen complete examples from this repertoire and is a great pleasure to read, thanks to the author's wonderful writing and the supreme importance of the question addressed.

After reading the Introduction, which raises questions about the composers' attitudes toward the newness of the

genre, which Castello dubbed *stile moderno*, I was so enthusiastic about this book that I could not bear to postpone reading the Appendix *La maniera di sonare con affetti cantabili: The Seconda Prattica and Instrumental Music*. Dell' Antonio has discovered and dispelled the paradox of the *seconda prattica*: if the music only serves the text, then its claim to expressivity on its own merit fails; if the music itself is expressive, then it doesn't need a text. The solution is that both vocal and instrumental music of the *stile nuovo*, or the 'affective' style, depend on *affetti* – with or without words to be enhanced. This may pull the rug out from under the theoreticians of the *seconda prattica* but it gives us a lot more insight into the music of the early baroque, and promotes a thoughtful re-reading of their theories.

The book will not tell you what instrumentation is appropriate to this music, but it will influence how you play it. An appreciation of its coherence and structure was long overdue.

Recercare VIII 1996: journal for the study and practice of early music Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana. 246pp, £45,000 ISBN 88-7096-060-9.

This annual journal (which always comes out several years late) is in Italian, but includes ample summaries in English after each article. The latest issue includes:

'New light shed on performance practice by an unpublished treatise on continuo playing for the archlute' by Marco Pesci. [The treatise, of 1720, attributed to Girolamo Chiti, contains 148 examples of realizations which imply a slightly different tuning more appropriate to continuo playing.]

'The piano at the grand-ducal court of Tuscany, 1700-1859: a documentary study, with reference to the harpsichords, spinets and spinettoni.' [This is the second part of a long study, the first part of which appeared in *Recercare VII* 1995.]

'Pages from my life. On events relating to opera poetry in Rome, Second Memoire' by Jacopo Ferretti, presented by Francesco Paolo Russo. [Ferretti was a librettist; he collaborated with Rossini on *La Cenerentola* and described Roman theatre of his time and his aesthetic principles in this 100-page autobiography of 1835.]

'Observations on a fortepiano by Vincenzo Cresci' by Donatella Degiampiero of the Laboratorio di Restauro del Forte-piano of Florence.

Back issues of this periodical, lavishly illustrated with black and white drawings and photographs, are still available and contributions on music in Italy between the 14th and the first half of the 19th centuries are accepted in five languages.

ROSSI: THE JEW OF MANTUA

Micheline Wandor

Don Harrán *Salamone Rossi: Jewish Musician in Late Renaissance Mantua*. Oxford UP, 1999. x + 310pp, £48.00 ISBN 0 19 8162715

This book has been some two decades in gestation, and the result is as exhaustive as it could be. It accompanies Harrán's meticulous edition of Rossi's collected works (CMM 100), and together this oeuvre will finally place Rossi into musicological history in the way he deserves.

The book, however, is not merely a rehabilitatory and partisan paean to yet another minor composer; rather, in the course of reconstructing a scarcely signposted biography, delineating and categorising the music, and suggesting their historical importances, Harrán also touches on a number of broader and important musical agendas. Necessarily, because of Rossi's contribution to the development of the trio sonata, Harrán has to cope with the cusp between Renaissance and Baroque (covered in his sub-title 'Late Renaissance'). Necessarily also, because of Rossi's unique contribution to Jewish sacred music (for the orthodox a contradiction in terms), Harrán has to deal with questions of cultural influence and allegiance – and therefore who appropriates Rossi and from what point of view. Was he a Jewish/Italian composer, Italian/Jewish, just Italian or just Jewish? This serves to remind us that social, cultural and, indeed, gender issues are always fundamentally important to the provenance and output of composers, just as they are in the other arts.

Rossi lived and worked in Mantua from around 1570 to 1628. He was a serious composer of 'art' music and also set 33 Hebrew texts for from three to eight voices, publishing altogether 13 collections of music, both instrumental and vocal. His published music always designates him 'Ebrei', and in his twin worlds of the Jewish community (officially ghettoised in 1612, but subject to discrimination of various kinds well before that) and the Gonzaga court, he plied his skills as a composer, instrumentalist and possibly singer.

As a Jew, he was proscribed from working for the church, and since Christian sacred music was one of the major ways, and entries into ways, in which a composer could earn a living, Rossi had limited chances of earning recognition as a composer. As well as having to wear distinguishing pieces of orange cloth on their clothes, Jews were not allowed to hold positions of power over Christians or compete with them for work or social position. Antisemitism of various sorts was endemic, alongside pockets of tolerance, co-existence and, in some cases, genuine collaboration and appreciation.

Jewish theatrical and musical troupes regularly provided entertainment for Carnival and court (always at their own

expense) and Rossi himself, on the payroll of the Gonzaga court, was in 1607 (renewed again in 1612) exempted from wearing the distinguishing badge. Thus he was also on the cusp between cultures, although it was the dominant musical culture which formed him. As a contemporary of Monteverdi (Rossi may have played in the first performance of *Orfeo* in 1608), the two collaborated with others in producing music for a Guarini comedy in 1608 (the music does not survive), and he set a text (with no devotional Christian content) for Andreini's sacred play *La Maddalena* in 1617.

Where he is historically and musically important is in a series of 'firsts' or near-firsts. He was one of the few vocal-music composers to publish instrumental music (four collections), and the only Mantuan composer to do so – though Harrán also points out that embedded in Monteverdi's vocal works are enough instrumental sections to argue that he too was a major instrumental composer. Many of Rossi's smaller instrumental pieces – *sinfonie*, *gagliarde* and other dances – might well have been composed as intermedi, either for the court or for some Jewish event, theatrical or private.

More telling, perhaps, is his contribution to the trio sonata. Harrán, along with Hugo Riemann, Manfred Bukofzer and, more recently, Peter Allsop, credits Rossi with precocity in crystallising the trio-sonata format: the composer himself characterised it as *in stilo moderno*, anticipating Castello, whose two collections of *sonate concertate in stile moderno* were published in the 1620s. As Harrán points out, Rossi had already paved the way for this clear, two treble voices/continuo structure in some of his earlier *sinfonie*, and indeed even in his early vocal *canzonette*. The variation sonata, in particular, looked back to the 16th-century division culture, while its musical structure looked forward to one of the dominant chamber forms of the 17th century. Rossi's final publication was of a series of exquisite *Madrigaletti*, effectively vocal trio-sonatas, which evoke echoes of far better known vocal pieces by Monteverdi.

The final 'first' lies on the *Songs of Solomon*, the 33 settings of Hebrew texts (mostly from the Psalms: Harrán explains the tradition of the punning title). Published in 1622-23, these produced a conundrum for the type-setting (Hebrew reads from right to left, music from left to right) and mark a radical departure for the synagogue where, despite some exceptions in northern Italy, the tradition was not to have music. They may be relatively conservative musically, but whether they were ever performed or not, they stand as a landmark in the history of Jewish sacred music.

Harrán's book meticulously analyses, musically and statistically, the characteristics of all the music, and as well

as placing it in both musical and cultural contexts, indicates its influence, not only in the sphere of Italian music, but within our own shores: Rossi's work appears in Tregian's anthology of madrigals (BL Egerton 3665) and Weelkes reworked six of his *canzonette*.

Harrán does have a cultural agenda, which relates to his sense of Rossi's importance as a Jewish composer – both in his *Songs of Solomon* and by virtue of the fact that he claims musical innovation as accruing to a Jew living between two cultures. He makes an interesting link between the *seconda pratica*, with the stress on textual clarity, with the same impulse deriving from Jewish traditions, which informs the setting of the Jewish texts. Here Italianate musical sophistication meets religious affiliation. At the same time, Harrán acknowledges that in the end one has to see Rossi as a unifying force in a series of opposites: old and new music, Christian and Jewish cultures, secular and sacred performance practices.

It seems to me perfectly plausible to suggest that one of the reasons why Rossi channelled his creative energies in part into developing the instrumental side was precisely because of his exclusion from the mainstream of traditional musical composition: that produced for the Christian church, which was primarily vocal. This may not have been conscious, and it is certainly not provable; but innovation can emerge from repression as well as by encouragement. This is not an argument for encouraging repression, but it may help to understand why some of the music came into being, and why its sometimes small-scale beauties were so important for the edifice of the baroque.

Micheline Wandor, along with Jennie Cassidy, Philip Thorby and others, will be performing some of Rossi's secular vocal and instrumental music at St Giles, Cripplegate, on 15 June 2000, and maybe elsewhere. Details will be in our diary.

REYNE ET ROUSSET

Rosalind Halton

A short extract from our travels in Europe this June – in which information from *EMR* proved to be invaluable.

Paris in June is full of festivals – music, theatre, even a poetry festival in the square of St. Sulpice. Not all of them receive equal coverage before or after the event. Thus a concert that I determined to go to after seeing it listed in the diary of the *EMR* seemed to have disappeared without trace by the time we arrived in Paris. It took several hours searching the parish of Gentilly (three métro stations from Jardins de Luxembourg) before we found the Eglise Saint-Saturnin, scene of a programme entitled *Hommage à Isaac de Benserade*, given by La Symphonie du Marais, directed by oboist Hugo Reyne. From one of their recordings *Musique à Danser* (Erato), I knew this was a group not to be missed in a programme of music by Lully. In this event – a part of the 16th Fête de Gentilly – declamation, singing of the highest order, narrative, and dance music were combined in a celebration of M. de Benserade, the first librettist of Lully, who eventually retired from the pressures of a career at the French Court to the country air of Gentilly. The almost total lack of publicity in the official Paris channels, matched with an absence of local knowledge about the Festival and the venue, had no impact on the size or enthusiasm of the audience: the lovely little church of St. Saturnin was packed. By the time the actor playing the dissolute Benserade (Benjamin Lazar) reached the triumph of his improvised verses for the Académie, there was rapt attention. No less enticing was the singing of soprano Françoise Masset. Whether in comic or tragic vein (e. g. *Plainte d'Ariane*), her timing and delivery of text was irresistible – flirtatious and moving by turns, with exquisite control of the sound and ornaments. An energetic perfor-

mance of dance music by Lully formed the backdrop to the enacted drama – in all, one of the liveliest entertainments we visited in Paris. La Symphonie du Marais is an ensemble at the forefront of current French baroque performance (and especially of 17th-century music), so our thanks to *EMR* for providing the information that enabled us to hear them.

Les Talens Lyriques is a group that doesn't leave loopholes in its publicity. The following weekend, at the Festival of St. Denis, in grander circumstances, and for a much grander ticket price, we heard them in an oratorio of Antonio Bononcini, *La decollazione di San Giovanni Battista*. Was this bound to be a duller, more 'musicological' type of event? Maybe. But the music would have been vastly better served by a different cast – these singers (apart from an outstanding young countertenor) appeared to have been co-opted from the 19th-century opera/oratorio department. Thus soured by the taste of the singing, my palate went on to be disappointed by listless violin playing, a theorbo player apparently inexperienced in a task of this size, and continuo playing from Christophe Rousset that added little substance. I think the music was interesting.

The performances by both La Symphonie du Marais and Les Talens Lyriques were given by ensembles scaled down from those that we hear on major occasions and recordings. The vigour of Hugo Reyne's direction and the commitment of the players to a wholly entertaining concept enabled the Lully/Benserade to survive and even flourish on this reduction of forces. With Les Talens Lyriques, we were left with marketing and a feeling that an Italian oratorio needs more than one violin a part, and maybe a dash of Italian violin playing and singing.

EASTERN PROMISE

Brian Clark

A decade has passed since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Before that time, early music, like everything else in life, was centrally controlled, with the most talented musicians recording for the national radio channel and record company. What effect has the sudden need for musicians to make a living in the new commercial world had on the early music scenes in Eastern Europe?

My first trip to Prague included a wonderful concert by Musica Antiqua Praha, directed by Pavel Klikar in a beautiful 18th-century palace. Since then, I have reviewed several compact discs (Grandi and Legrenzi being the most recent), but I have heard nothing of them for a considerable time. A new Supraphon CD (*Flos florum: Italian Vespers in Bohemia, c. 1650*. 81 9014-2 231. 73' 17") features The Prague Chamber Singers (including Michael Pospíšil, one of Klikar's regular singers). The group consists of several male singers (including *canto* up to the E at the top of the treble clef) with violins, trombones and continuo (also played by Pospíšil – even when he's singing!). The program draws heavily on Rigatti and Merula, as well as Girolamo Marinoni, Giacomo Ganassi, Jan Simbracky, Palestrina and Mr Anon. The soprano singing is typical: the men have no difficulty in reaching the high notes, but dexterity is a little lacking. The disc follows a Marian Vespers sequence, with the requisite plainsong and substitute motets. It's essential listening for anyone interested in this repertoire.

Zelenka's *Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis* has just become available again in this country in a performance by the group which is probably Prague's most widely known – Musica Florea. Recorded by Studio Matous, the soloists are Anna Hlavenková, Magdalena Kožená & Lubomír Moravec, Richard Sporka & Stanislav Predota and Michal Pospíšil. I was extremely enthusiastic about it as a new release, and it's a welcome re-appearance in the catalogue. Musica Florea (who recently made their Deutsche Grammophon debut) are presently involved in a staged production of Rameau's *Castor et Pollux* in Prague, which will be repeated in April 2000 and at Versailles in September 2000. As well as this, they are preparing a CD of cantatas by Josef Leopold Václav Dukat. Financial restrictions, unfortunately, led to the cancellation of a planned performance of Zelenka's St Wenceslas piece, *Sub olea pacis et palma virtutis*: I hope this will still happen as part of next year's 'Prague, The City of Culture'. In October and November 2000, Musica Florea will be in Australia performing Bach cantatas, the A major mass and the St John Passion.

Schola Cantorum Pragensis was established by David Eben in 1987 and has a wide range of concert programmes: *Office des morts* – *Messe de la Toussaint* (a Mass and Office of the

Feast of All Saints, liturgy for the departed), *Bohemorum sancti* (Czech Saints in Holy Jerusalem), *Rosa mystica* ('Devotion to the Virgin Mary in Medieval Bohemia'), *In Pragensi Ecclesia* (Christmas at Prague's Cathedral during the reign of Charles IV), *Anno Domini 997* (a celebration of the Millennium of devotion to Saint Adalbert). All of these have been recorded. The group also offers to sing during liturgical services (Mass or Vespers), interpretation seminars and practical rehearsals with choirs, as well as lecture-recitals.

Both Musica Florea and Schola Cantorum Pragensis are managed by Impresario Czech Arts Agency (Tel. 00420 2 231 86 95, Fax: 248 191 35', e-mail: impresario@traveller.cz)

The Czech Baroque Trio has just released a CD of six violin sonatas by Frantisek Benda, again with Studio Matous (MK 0052-2 131, 72' 44"). It's quite clear from these pieces that he must have been an astounding performer. Here is repertoire which Elisabeth Wallfisch can move on to when she's finished Leclair. Antonín Rous is no mean fiddler himself – some of the virtuoso passages are brilliantly carried off, and he makes a lovely sound when just playing with the cello. The harpsichord is something of a disruptive influence – it's so bright that the violinist seems to feel that he has to compete; when it's replaced by organ, the sounds balance far better and the musicians calm down considerably.

Across the border in Slovakia, the most active groups are Musica Aeterna (a chamber orchestra under the leadership of Peter Zajicek) and Camerata Bratislava, directed by Jan Rozehnal. Slovart Records (the address of their web-site is: <http://www.slovart-records.sk>) have produced an exciting sequence of recordings featuring both of these groups, some of which we have already reviewed. Biber: *Mensa sonora Pars VI* (SR-0002-2-131, 56' 14") is a wonderful selection of string chamber music, played with a combined sense of style and fun which is not that often heard – the fiddles throw caution to the wind to great effect on the last track. The disc is filled up with four sonatas from *Fidicinium sacro-profanum* and three from *Sonatae tam aris...* Sebastiano Bodino: *Sonatas I-VI* (SR-0008-2-131, 58' 56") features sonatas for two violins and continuo which combine abstract movements with stylised dances. Appropriately enough, the sound is a little more refined than the Biber, and the interplay between the violins is neatly handled. Although the gentle strum of the harpsichord reminded me rather of virginals in its treble register and the acoustic was slightly on the dry side, I thoroughly enjoyed six new works by a composer I'd never heard of (his dates are 1700-1760). The first Camerata Bratislava disc I listened to was Jan Simbracky: Latin church music (SR-0019, 55' 28").

We hear large-scale settings in the Gabrieli mode and taut four-part polyphony in the alternatim Magnificat, taken by solo voices. The instrumental playing in the *Missa [brevis] super omnes gentes* is very good – which comes as little surprise as the cast list reads like Musica Aeterna. There is truly a wealth of good music here, well performed and recorded. The group's other CD, Jacob Gallus, Krystof Harant: *Masses & Sacred Works* (SR-0014-2-131, 48' 44") features the *Missa super Sancta Maria* by the former (published in 1580 in Prague) and a five-part *Missa super Dolorosi martyr* (based on Marenzio's madrigal) by the latter, as well as Harant's *Maria Kron* and *Qui confidunt in Domino*. Reduced in number from the previous disc, the choir sings stylishly with good balance between the parts, although a little more definition of the bass part would sometimes have been welcomed. The tactus is relatively constant and Rozehnal never slows down or speeds up without making a valid musical or spiritual point. A lovely disc. The most recent Slovart disc to feature early music is Vivaldi: *Gloria, Magnificat* (SR-0036, 40' 06"), featuring Musica Vocalis, with a band which once again reads like Musica Aeterna, and I have to say that they impressed me again. The singing is very good. At least some of the choir overlaps with Camerata Bratislava; the only soloists not taken from the choir are soprano Kamila Zajickova and alto Petra Noskaiova, who makes a brilliant job of the 'Domine Deus, Agnus Dei' in the Gloria. With such excellent performers and recordings of this high quality, Slovakia's early music scene should go forward strongly. I've already suggested to them that they should champion one of their best native composers, Samuel Capricornus.

Turning my attention to Poland, I found myself rather in the dark. There is the wonderful group Il Tempo, whose previous CDs we have reviewed, but from whom there seems to have been nothing new for a time. I resorted to the Internet as a source of information, and managed to make contact with a couple of groups. Tadeusz Czechak plays in both baroque and medieval groups, but favours the latter. In May, as part of the Wroclaw Early Music Days, he performed songs from the *Carmina Burana* – apparently for the first time in Poland. Besides Dekameron (his core group), there were other singers and musicians – altogether there were the soloist, an ensemble of nine singers, two fiddles, rebec, recorder, gothic harp, lute and percussion. In July, at one of the most important Early Music Festivals (in Stary Sacz) they gave a concert of Songs from the Times of Crusades featuring two singers, a pair of fiddles, percussion and Czechak himself playing lute, citole, oud, chitarra morisca. The same festival also featured Sequentia from Cologne. In August, three of the group led a masterclass for medieval music in Sandomierz, south Poland. This year the subject was French music of the 13th and 14th centuries, including excerpts from Adam de la Halle's *The Play of Robin and Marion*. There were 15 students, singers and instrumentalists – fiddle, rebec, recorders, lute. Their CD of Marian songs from Spain, France, Germany and Poland, (from the 12th to the 15th centuries) will be released in a month or two, to be followed by one featuring Polish

medieval instruments, which have been reconstructed from archaeological work.

Tomasz Dobrzanski is a recorder player, who plays in the Wroclaw Baroque Trio together with Teresa Kaminska on cello and Jan Tomasz Adamus, keyboard. There is no music specifically for recorder from 18th-century Poland and, although there are some solo *canzone* from the previous century, the Trio concentrates on the mainstream sonata literature, such as Mancini, Handel and Sammartini, occasionally including solo pieces for each of the players, as well as collaborating with singers. They have taken part in most of important early music festivals in Poland: Kraków, Waraw, Łódź. I was not able to find any CDs by The Wroclaw Baroque Trio.

The most progressive ensemble in Russia is Moscow Baroque, who are basically a trio-sonata set-up. They have their own web page (<http://www.mp3.com/mosbar>) where you can find out more details and even listen to some examples of their playing in MPEG-3 format. Nikolay Doljnikov (doljnikov@mail.ru) was their main contact, and he also recommended an on-line magazine (<http://www.online-music.orc.ru>); unfortunately I was unable to access it.

My primary interest in writing this piece was to find out more about early music making in Eastern Europe, and I regret not having found out much more than I have. If any of our subscribers are involved in projects in Eastern Europe, please let us know: we have list events we hear about (especially when King's Music publications are involved) in our diary, which is a means of letting people know what's happening. I tried to contact musicians in Romania and the former Yugoslavia without success; contacts with the seemingly very active Baltic Republics proved similarly fruitless! If you play in a group in any of the countries mentioned let us have review copies of your recordings, and tell us about your concerts – we are longing to find out more!



Greensleeves to a Ground

LONDON MUSIC

Shane Fletcher & Andrew Benson-Wilson

Even the most conscientious reviewer needs a holiday, so the first few Proms have been covered by Shane Fletcher (welcome back).

Millennium fever took hold of the Proms this year in a programme entitled 'One Thousand Years of Music in a Day', a two-part marathon starting at 2.30 in the afternoon of July 18th and lasting late into the night. Guiltily joining the event after Holst's *Planets* (well, this was, as the programme reminded us, also the year of the solar eclipse and the thirtieth anniversary of the moon landing), the main part of the afternoon was devoted to a scamper through the history of music from plainchant to Purcell. I hope no one took away with them the idea that Philip Pickett's 'Round-dance of the Stars' (there's that astro-nomic theme again) was a typical view of music that could be danced to in the middle ages. Twelve years ago when this music was performed in St Paul's Knightsbridge in a late night Prom I remember it being infectiously enjoyable; on a Sunday afternoon in the Albert Hall it was tedious. Whether this was just the building or whether there were more repeats and more instrumental interludes this time, I am not sure. The Hilliard Ensemble's approach to the same period of music history was much more successful; well articulated but legato Pérotin and Machaut made the Albert Hall a fair substitute for a French Gothic cathedral. Jeremy Summerly's Oxford Camerata made a splendid Proms debut with a selection of English 16th- and 17th-century church music, cleanly and crisply sung but always expressive. A long afternoon also included some Susato dances, which made one appreciate just how much David Munrow enlivened such apparently vapid music. By the time Philip Pickett returned with the Musicians of the Globe for five airs from *The Lord Hay's Masque*, an intriguing reconstruction by Peter Holman of music from a masque by Thomas Campion and others, he had a tough job on his hands. The marathon was getting behind and a worried audience (with an evening concert ahead of them, each half of which was to last more than an hour) was nervously eyeing its watches as the scheduled hour for supper had halved. For those making a day of it, the title of one of the evening's works, *The Triumph of Time and Truth*, must have had an ironic ring.

The previous evening saw a visit to the Proms of Concentus Musicus Wien with Nikolaus Harnoncourt and Cecilia Bartoli. The programme included two of Haydn's *Paris* symphonies, 86 and 87. Harnoncourt's great strength in late 18th-century music is his refusal to be dominated by metre. The speed and articulation of a theme is governed by the music within it rather than by the speed of the movement as a whole. Nowhere was this more telling than in the first movement of Symphony 87, perfectly balanced

by having both halves repeated. There were strong dynamic contrasts here (even with only two double basses rather than the 1780s Paris orchestra's ten) and a delight not just in the witty moments but in the strong structure of the movement. In both symphonies the minuets were a delight; only in the slow movement of No. 86 did Harnoncourt's concern for detail lead to a lack of continuity, so that the music did not flow properly.

Between the symphonies we were treated to some classical showstoppers from Cecilia Bartoli, one of that rare group of singers who can make even the most distant member of the audience feel that she is singing specially for them. Haydn's *Scena di Berenice* carries the hallmark of the best of his music written for London, the importance of simple strong melody. This was wonderfully communicated by Bartoli as were the pyrotechnics of the aria 'Al tuo seno fortunato' from his *Orfeo ed Euridice*, though the sound at the top of her wide range was not as open and warm as it can be. Only in Mozart's 'Un moto di gioia' (the Susanna substitute aria in *Figaro* written for Adriana del Bene, who went on to be the first Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*) was Bartoli too knowing, unable to convey the plain simplicity of the music.

One of the highlights of the season – for any music-lover, not just the early music enthusiast – must have been Simon Rattle's account of Rameau's *Les Boréades* with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Rameau's music is a completely separate evolution of Baroque style than that found in England or Germany in the mid-18th century; it represents a more progressive approach that leads naturally on to the 19th and even 20th centuries. If in the middle of *Les Boréades* someone had appeared on stage and started singing Berlioz' *Nuits d'Été* it would not have been out of place. Much of what we now think of as later developments in musical style are all embedded in this score: rich harmonic language, the handing over of themes from instrument to instrument in a process of fragmentation and the free continuous composition of opera where there are no rigid lines between chorus, aria, recitative and dance. Perhaps we should not be surprised by this; after all, German-speaking Europe at the time viewed France as an alarmingly progressive place in politics and philosophy, so why not in the arts?

The plot of the opera exactly reflects the music: a surprisingly modern view of a fairytale-like story of rejection of worldly status, that hovers between a Baroque and a Wagnerian version of a myth. In its interpretation, Rattle revelled in the eccentricity of it all, living every moment. In a strong cast, Charles Workman had some difficulty maintaining full control of the high tenor role of Abaris, the

lover for whom Alpheus (Barbara Bonney on excellent form) abdicates the throne. David Wilson-Johnson had the splendid task of hanging around for most of the opera until the principals were getting a little tired and then blowing onto the stage to impersonate the North Wind which he did with great aplomb.

All this and we had only reached Prom number five out of a series of seventy-two. Nicholas Kenyon had clearly planned a millennial season; but will 2000 outshine 1999?

Shane Fletcher

The English Concert and Choir presented Bach and Haydn as warm-ups for Mozart's *Requiem* (Prom, RAH, 8 August). According to a Radio 3 interview earlier that day, Trevor Pinnock was in some doubt as to whether to use any continuo instruments to support the choir in Bach's opening motet *Singet dem Herrn*. In the end he decided against. With two choirs of 21 each, there was certainly no need of further volume in the voluminous (and packed) Albert Hall. Pinnock sensibly arranged his two choirs fairly close together with the sopranos at the outer edges. This made sense, giving a good stereo effect but also allowing an effective combination in the final 4-part fugue. Both the unforced tone and the steady pace correctly made little concession to the bathroom acoustics (and humidity). Pinnock allowed the pathos of the opening of Haydn's Symphony 49 *La passione* to be felt and added to, rather than relieved, the intensity in the bustling and angular second movement. In Haydn's *Insanae et vanae curae* of 1784, he engineered a masterly build-up of tension and volume before the choir and orchestra finally came together at the end. I wasn't convinced about Pinnock's rather percussive harpsichord continuo in the symphony – the high frequencies were far too prominent from my seat. I had a similar problem with the trumpets in the *Requiem*, particularly in the *Benedictus* and similar places, where their role should be supportive, pointing up a phrase, rather than dominating – their open 5th on final chord was too exposed. The choir got the largest cheer at the end. It included its fair share of wobblers, but none of them dominated and they coalesced into an effective and vibrant unity. The same cannot be said of the soloists. Only the tenor Mark Le Brocq showed an understanding of period performance practice and the need to avoid the persistent vibrato that affected the soprano and mezzo. This is not the first time that I have found it difficult to understand why a conductor of high standing in the early music world has booked or accepted an operatic singer (or singer choosing to sing in that manner) alongside a period instrument orchestra.

The Proms moved to the sauna-like lecture theatre of the Victoria and Albert Museum for a lunchtime concert by David Wilson-Johnson and the Soloists of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (9 August). 'The High Summer of French Musical Genius' featured Rameau's early cantatas *Aquilon et Orinthe* and *Thétis*, both magnificently sung by Wilson-Johnson as he portrayed the North Wind (again),

the King of Athens' daughter (whose fire he stoked), a thunderous Jupiter, Neptune and a sea nymph. It is not an easy venue to communicate to the audience in – the seats rake sharply up from the stage. It would be too much to expect a performance from memory, but the communication was noticeably better when Wilson-Johnson could lift his eyes from the music. It was a shame that the BBC had not provided any programme notes or translations, although, unlike the Albert Hall Proms, we had the on-air introductions. The instrumentalists coped well with the appallingly hot and humid atmosphere. But the violin and flute did less well with *notes inégales*, frequently over-doing the dotting or making a sequence sound too mechanistic.

A tragically prophetic bit of programme planning by the BBC (Prom 26 August) bought together Brumel's *Et ecce terrae motus* (Earthquake) Mass and Louis Andriessen's reflection on death *Trilogy of the Last Day* (1997) just days after the earthquake in Turkey. The performance of the Mass was dedicated to the victims. Apart from noting the use of the ancient Japanese instrument, the koto, an *EMR* review of the later piece will need to wait a century or so. Brumel's astonishing mass setting (c1500) was performed by the BBC Singers with His Majesty's Sagbutts and Cornetts under Bo Holton (who had also reconstructed the *Agnus Dei*). Although the programme note suggests that the size of the 28 BBC singers (28) was 'very close to those employed by Lassus' in his Munich performance c1570, the 33 singers noted by Lassus covered only the nine lowest parts, the three top parts being sung by an unspecified number of choirboys. This could have excused larger vocal forces. The three cornets and nine sackbuts (sensibly spread around the singers) were used well, arriving and leaving almost imperceptibly and adding punch to the full choir sections. The joy of this mass is Brumel's magnificent use of vocal textures, including simple homophonic passages, antiphonal interplay, complex rhythms and sections where small motifs tumble over each other in excitement. At key moments in the text, Brumel suddenly switches to a small-scale texture of solo voices, notably during the 'Qui tollis peccata mundi' and the spiritual focal point of the whole mass, 'et homo factus est' in the Credo. I have been critical of the BBC Singers in the past, but this was one of the best performances by them that I have heard. Perhaps it was the addition of instruments or the vast acoustics, but the wide variety of vocal styles that can hinder their performances of early music blended rather more than usually. There was some particularly beautiful singing by an unnamed alto in the 'Hosanna'. [It is interesting that this unusual work will also have received three amateur outings – I won't call them performances – within two months. CB]

It takes quite a performer to fill the Albert Hall for a late night Prom (27 August), but Andreas Scholl is reaching such heights of stardom, that some reviewers (or readers) might wish to pull him down a peg or two. But, even if I were so minded, it would be almost impossible to find anything critical to say. This chap really does walk on water, musically speaking. There is something quite unearthly

about the beauty and absolute purity of his voice and he combines this with astonishing musical perception and depth and simple but effective communication with his audience. His timing and use of rhetorical pauses, for example in the da capo of the aria 'Silient zephyri' from Vivaldi's cantata *Filiae maestae Jerusalem* was spellbinding. His use of gentle vibrato to colour a note whose pitch he had already established was masterly—for once it was easy to differentiate a vibrato from a trill. With the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra and his sister, the soprano Elisabeth Scholl, the final work was Pergolesi's *Stabat mater*. This showed the otherwise impressive instrumentalists at their weakest, with the bass string opening coming over as more dogmatic than doleful and some out-of-place violin slithers in 'Fac me vere tecum flere'. But overall the instrumental playing, which included concertos by Durante and (no longer attributed to Pergolesi) Wassenauer, was good, with some characterful lute continuo playing and an engaging physical presence with all upper strings standing and swaying gently to the pulse. The organ continuo got a bit too clever for my taste, particularly with the addition of counter-melodies within the vocalist's tessitura. In less elevated company, Elisabeth Scholl's singing would have sounded more impressive, but I am afraid she didn't stand a chance against her Superman brother. Such is sibling life.

The BBC's Goethe weekend on Radio 3 included the Prom performance of Schumann's *Scenes from Goethe's 'Faust'* (28 August) with Sir John Eliot Gardiner conducting the Monteverdi Choir and City of Birmingham Symphony Youth Chorus (who gave an impressive display of synchronised speed standing and sitting) with the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique. This is a late work, composed over a period of nine years when Schumann's depressive swings were taking greater hold. It is a remarkable piece which, despite many potential pit-falls, manages to portray a musical unity and philosophical grasp of Goethe's complex outpouring of Germanic romantic angst. The instrumental forces tell the story as much as the singers, with the woodwind loosening Faust's limbs in scene 4, and a pre-Brucknerian brass portrayal of the peaks, gigantic and supernal (what would German Romantics have done without the Alps?) Part One narrows the narrative of the story down to three snapshot scenes which require some literary leaps of faith, particularly in following Gretchen from her seductively fresh-faced naivety in scene 1 to her impregnated, tormented, abandoned and destroyed persona in scenes 2 and 3. The rest of the piece concentrates on Faust's removal of himself from the destructive hubris that he has caused as he concentrates on higher metaphysical things – the Romantic equivalent of going off to the pub, I suppose. I will never understand why the miserable Gretchen finally intercedes on his behalf to save him from his self-generated hell – I would have scratched his eyes out if I had been female and had been treated like that. Although not quite reaching 'semi-staged' status, Gardiner did make use of the space of the stage by having Gretchen's alter ego, the Evil Spirit, stand just behind her; the four Grey Women (Want, Guilt, Worry and Distress) spread across the width

of the back of the stage, and a free-range Mephistopheles moved down the stalls steps as he supervised the digging of Faust's well-deserved grave. But there were some oddities in the stage positions, notably having many of the solos sung from a position between the conductor and the orchestra, thereby shielded from a section of the audience. The Orchestre were not at their best, although the horns behaved themselves and there were some nice solo vignettes. The timpani were very loud from where I sat, but that could have been one of the acoustic quirks that make the Albert Hall such fun. I have written before about the extent to which the physical presence or vocal style of a singer can help or hinder their portrayal of a character part. This was an issue here. Hellevi Martinpelto's Gretchen was unbelievable in her sweet young thing persona, both vocally and physically (although her piercing top note as she pleads with the Mater Dolorosa to be saved from death and stain certainly made the point), and Mark Beesley's Mephistopheles and Evil Spirit were beautifully sung but far too nice. Even Dietrich Henschel's lithesome baritone voice was far too light to portray the torments of the good doctor. Vocally the star of the show first made herself felt (as Soprano 2) with a very high four note descending phrase in the sunrise scene. Later, more substantial contributions as Worry (cursing Faust to blindness) and A Younger Angel showed that the sparkling Swedish singer, Miah Perssen, is a singer to watch out for. Four other stars were the clear tones of four young girls from the superb City of Birmingham Symphony Youth Chorus who appeared as the Blessed Boys in the final Act. Like Mark Beesley, they all sang from memory.

Apart from the continuing Proms, August is a very quiet month in musical London. One exception was the recital given at Hampstead's Fenton House by the winner of the 4th Broadwood Harpsichord Competition, the Canadian Philippa Estall, now resident in London (18 August). She started with the rather temperamental c1600 Vincentius virginals. Although she showed some nifty fingerwork and sharp articulation in the more vampish sections of Bull's *The King's Hunt*, her playing of the Italian repertoire raised a number of questions about her understanding of the complex interpretation and ornamentation rules that apply to that repertoire and also more basic and general aspects of early keyboard technique such as fingering, articulation and clarity of touch. She seemed rather more at home in the 18th-century repertoire on the gigantic 1770 Shudi & Broadwood harpsichord, where she brought out the often-hidden expressive quality in Soler's C minor Sonata and gave a very forthright performance of Handel's 7th Suite. Her powerful, if occasionally rather frenetic, playing of the *Passacaille* threatened to propel the harpsichord through the window and down Holly Hill. The Mozart variations on *Ah vous dirai-je maman* were played with similar gusto, which clearly delighted the audience. For somebody who has apparently only been playing the harpsichord for a short period of time, she has obviously come some way; but there are still remnants of the concert pianist about many aspects of her performance.

THE SUFFOLK VILLAGES FESTIVAL – MUSIC IN VENICE

John & Jenny Edmonds

This very special (and well organised) event opened with the Monteverdi 1610 Vespers at St. Mary's Church, in the beautiful village of Stoke by Nayland on Friday 27 August. What an exciting start to the weekend! Psalmody with The Ravenscroft Consort and members of Essex Baroque Orchestra directed by Peter Holman gave an excellent performance of this work. This performance was to a packed church of over 400 people and, judging by the applause, they thoroughly enjoyed it. Thirteen singers took part with Patrick McCarthy, Claire Tomlin, Paula Bishop, Toby Parr, Janet Bullard, Tim Gillott, Andrew Carpenter and Jennie Cassidy taking the more prominent solos, along with a fine ensemble of violins, cornetts, sackbuts, theorbos, bass violin, violone and two chamber organs, with the few bars for flutes and recorders slipped in by the wind players. Peter Holman pointed out that he wanted to create a big sound by really pushing this small group of singers to their limit. He achieved this with some fine vocal work from the choir, fully supported by sympathetic playing from the instrumentalists. The programme provided informed notes by Clifford Bartlett (whose edition was used and who played one of the organs) and one elderly gentleman was very pleased to find the text laid out for him to follow. The bats were encouraged to do their aerial acrobatics as the music rang round the rafters – a great success!

Saturday dawned bright and Vivaldi Chamber Concertos were on the programme at St. Mary's Church Boxford to be played by Tassilo Erhardt, violin; Sarah Saunders, recorder & oboe; Ann Allen, oboe; Sally Holman, bassoon; Louise Holman, cello and Peter Holman, chamber organ. 'Very inspiring', a direct quote from an overheard concert goer, 'I feel as if I am walking on air!' Once again the church was full and the expectant audience was not disappointed with excellent playing from this young group with their self-confessed slightly older continuo player. [If the family consort is to continue, perhaps Tricia Holman should start practising her violin and lute again.] The programme comprised concertos for varying ensembles without orchestra, of which RV90 *Il Gardellino* was the show-stealer, with a particularly challenging recorder part played by Sarah Saunders. According to Peter Holman, the imitation of birds by composers was mirrored by the imitation of the recorder by the birds! The use of the chamber organ was, according to the notes, in line with the first performances of these works, as was the use of the recorder, rather than transverse flute. I personally enjoyed the recorder but missed the harpsichord.

In the evening, after a brilliant and inexpensive meal at The Angel Inn in Stoke by Nayland we joined the throng heading for the opera in the Middle School, Haydn's *The*

Apothecary (*Lo speciale*, 1768). The cast was Yvonne Barclay Grilletta, Jacqueline Varsey *Volpino*, Arwel Treharne Morgan *Mengone*, Colin Baldy *Sempronio* and Hugh Hilliard-Parker *a servant*; Jack Edwards directed, with Peter Holman in charge of the musical side. We didn't realise that early opera could be so amusing. The orchestra, lead by Judy Tarling, included amateur players mixed with the professionals, rose to the occasion. The singing and acting were a delight, with many truly funny moments and several grunts of approval around me at the suggestion that women are hard to understand. Surely not [quoth John]! The subject of the new newspapers and believing all that is written there in has echoes still resounding today. The stage sets were good as were the costumes. It certainly justified being a sell-out. If only Opera Restor'd could reach far and wide there would be many more opera fans.

On Sunday morning we investigated Nayland, the village in which we were staying. What a beautiful area of the country it is! We arrived at the church in Stoke by Nayland in time to hear rehearsals for the evening performance, *The Art of Mediaeval Song* by Catherine Bott *soprano*, Pavlo Beznosuk *vielle*, Mark Levy *vielle* and Frances Kelly *harp*. The church was once again packed for this concert. Catherine Bott introduced each item and explained the text preferring to introduce each item to the audience rather than give the text so that we could listen without feeling we needed to follow. It was a very successful programme with beautiful singing and stunning *vielle* playing from Pavlo and Mark, Frances skilfully adding the harp's own special quality to the ensemble. We were delighted with songs of love and loss and songs in praise of the patrons. In her notes Catherine Bott wrote that 'we cannot recreate the time but can allow the music of the past to come to us so that we can enjoy all that is truly timeless in the subtle marriage of words and melody'. With the expertise of these skilled and knowledgeable musicians and the words and music from such as Landini and Dufay it was certainly an evening to enjoy. The bats were certainly moved by it!

What can one say about Crispian Steele-Perkins' funny, informative and accessible survey of the history of the trumpet family from ancient times, which began the next day's programme? But oh dear! The electronic key-board does not enhance the look of the performance or the sound, even though Christopher Roberts played it well.

Which brings me to the exhibition of instruments. Alan Gotto (Norwich) had two super instruments, harpsichord and organ, which would have made all the difference to Crispian's brilliant lecture recital. There were twelve exhibitors in Stoke by Nayland Church during the concerts

showing lutes, organs, bows, violins, harpsichords, keyboard miniatures, viols, early piano, baroque oboes and a goodly selection of music and CD's.

And so to the final concert, The Fam'd Italian Masters, at St. Mary's Church, Boxford on the evening of 30 August. Crispian Steele-Perkins played trumpet, Timothy Kenworthy-Brown sang countertenor, with the Essex Baroque Orchestra, leader Judy Tarling, directed from the chamber organ by Peter Holman. The interesting combinations of instruments featured in this brilliant concert certainly was the icing on the cake of a wonderful weekend. All deserve individual comment, but space is limited. In Vivaldi's extraordinary *Salve Regina* in C minor, RV616, the alto is accompanied by two recorders, a double string orchestra and two organs, with the text illustrated by a series of kaleidoscopic and highly sophisticated changes of texture, using echo, muting and accompanying by recorders to achieve this. Vivaldi's *Concerto funebre* in B flat, RV 579, gave Andrew Mayes an opportunity to let us hear the tenor chalumeau, and a very interesting sound it was too! Useful

notes (an asset to the Festival as a whole) told us that the muted effect of this piece, possibly written for a memorial service in the chapel of the Pietà, was achieved by muting violins and violas in the first three movements as well as muting the oboe by a ball of paper inserted into the bell. The highlight of this concert for us was Vivaldi's *Nisi Dominus* in G minor, RV608, for alto, viola d'amore, strings and continuo, beautifully sung, with the viola d'amore expertly played by Tassilo Erhardt. The programme finished with Alessandro Scarlatti's *Sinfonia No.2* in D (1715) with Ann Allen playing recorder very stylishly alongside Crispian on trumpet. It was hard to follow the *Nisi Dominus*, but they managed to bring the concert weekend to a successful conclusion.

This was a highly enjoyable weekend of outstanding music, wonderful scenery, peace and good food! According to one of the organisers, it was the best Festival so far. As this was only our second, we can't judge, but can well believe it. It was well organised, with many an unseen hand contributing towards a smooth production. Long may it continue!

FESTIVAL IN FRAMLINGHAM

Ann Elliott

Malcolm Russell's East Anglian Academy of Organ and Early Keyboard Music is fast becoming a firm feature on the musical landscape of the region. This year's festival in Framlingham from 2-4 September opened with Evensong from the 1549 King Edward Prayer Book in celebration of its 450th anniversary, with setting and anthems by Tallis sung beautifully by members of The Kirbye Consort from Bury St Edmunds. Even the hymns were in keeping.

Billed previously as Concertos, Sonatas and Trios by Bach and his Predecessors, Contemporaries and Successors, the festival theme at first seemed rather too wide. However, this proved not to be the case, as the three recitals were firmly structured to be enlightening, without being didactic.

Gerald Gifford's programme, J. S. Bach and his Circle, was subtitled 'studies in the assimilation and development of the concerto, trio and sonata in works for solo organ and harpsichord.' The pieces alternated between harpsichord and the Tamar Organ, one of the few instruments in the country that can be played with original pre-Commonwealth stops. Gifford's playing was immaculate, and his exploitation of the various timbres open to him imaginative. But more than that, in that almost all the works except those by Bach himself were transcriptions from some other media, he succeeded in retaining and adapting the original instrumental style within the confines of the

solo instrument. Bach's cousin, Johann Gottfried Walther, was the arch-arranger, with concertos by Torelli, Telemann and Albinoni, and variations on a bass by Corelli. Bach's own input, 6 *Sinfonie a tre* for harpsichord, the mighty organ prelude on *Wachet auf* and the C minor Prelude and Fugue, showed off both composer and player as masters of idiomatic writing. Sonatas by Bach's sons C. P. E. and J. C. F. demanded a very different manner of playing as the style moves towards the classical.

I missed the Bach organ recital by the Italian organist Emanuele Cardì. The final concert, Bach Sonatas, a Partita and a Concerto was given by Katy Bircher *baroque flute*, Mark Levy *gamba* and Gary Cooper *harpsichord*. Whereas the previous programmes included trios transcribed for organ, they began with a delightful Trio Sonata in D Minor adapted from an organ trio. In exuberant sections, one wished that baroque flutes sounded louder, but then the acoustic of St Michael's is nothing if not capricious. There followed a sonata for gamba with harpsichord obbligato and another for flute and harpsichord. It was lovely to hear virtuoso playing by all instruments in contrast to the rather plodding role of harpsichord and gamba in their continuo role as heard in the finale sonata. Katy Bircher played the A minor solo partita with brilliance and sensitivity, and Gary Cooper's performance of the Italian Concerto was stunning.

RECORD REVIEWS

CHANT

Terra adriatica: Italian and Croatian medieval sacred music Dialogus, Katarina Livljanic dir 66' 09"
L'empreinte digitale ED 13107

A fascinating recording by seven lady singers from as many countries. The Italian contribution comprises three *laude* and chant with original or improvised counterpoint. The booklet gives sources but says nothing about what the singers have to work on; the one piece I have a copy of, the *Credo* from Bologna Q11, has two parts in chant notation on a single stave in *binatim* style, and is sung very convincingly. I'm less happy with the Croatian pieces based on 1983 transcriptions of traditional performances from Split: I'd be interested to hear recordings of the originals. On the whole, we have to take what the singers have done on trust; it mostly sounds convincing and will appeal to those who enjoy Hildegard, though the words are not always so poetic: nearly nine minutes of *x begat y*, for instance – one can see why passages of polyphony were often added to enliven the genealogy of Christ, that most boring chunk of the bible and liturgy! CB

MEDIEVAL

Aines: mistero provenzale medioevale Ensemble Cantilena, Stefano Albarello dir 66' 38"
Symphonia SY 99165

Like the Anonymous 4 disc reviewed below, this is an unaccustomed venture into the medieval world for me, and one that I enjoyed. Taken from a live performance (most of the spoken text has been edited out), the CD tells the story of St Agnes, as it is related in a Vatican MS of uncertain date and provenance. The language is Provençal and the music monodic, with the instruments either doubling or occasionally strumming in rhythm, but with nothing too obtrusive. The performers clearly know Sequentia's recording of Hildegard's *Ordo virtutum*, as the Devil's outbursts on that set (which made me jump out of my seat the first time I heard it) are echoed here. There's nothing wrong with adapting such dramatic means to your own needs, and in a language which one doesn't really understand, such interpretations convey much more meaning than the dry readings we sometimes have on such recordings. Not quite the spell-binding *Play of Daniel* from Andrew Lawrence-King and Co, but listening to this was a very worthwhile musical experience which I hope to repeat in the not-too-distant future. BC

In my absence BC has taken over some of the CDs I put aside for myself but knew I would not have time to listen to: others have been deferred to next month. CB

Epitaph: Medieval Iceland Sverrir Guðjónsson
Ct & ensemble 50' 25"
Opus 111 OPS 30-253

The countertenor Sverrir Guðjónsson is one of the most accomplished singers in Iceland today. For this record he has assembled folk songs that are mainly taken from the collection of Rev. Bjarni Thorsteinsson. This was printed between 1906 and 1909 and was instrumental in the preservation of Iceland's almost lost musical heritage. Sverrir presents these songs often accompanied by lute, recorder, viola da gamba and percussion. While this provides a lush support to his superb singing, it is by no means an authentic rendering, as these instruments were not used by medieval Icelanders. This however does not detract from the value of this record, as the performances are of the highest order. The recording is resonant and full of atmosphere. The accompanying booklet has excellent background information and an English translation of each song. All in all a most enjoyable collection of old Icelandic musical treasures. Astmar Olafsson

Legends of St Nicholas: Medieval Chant and Polyphony Anonymous 4 69' 46"
Harmonia Mundi HMU 907232

St Nicholas is the focus of the latest release from the four ladies who, it seems, you either love or hate. I come from the former camp, and I found this disc every bit as enjoyable and relaxing as I have their others. Original music is interspersed with an *olde englishe* narrative, set by the members of Anonymous 4 in a most convincing pseudo-early style – which will doubtless have the truists up in arms. There was, for once, a chink in the Unanimous 4 total blend – some of the two-part pieces revealed just a hint of difference in voice character, but I'm afraid even that didn't reduce the amount of pleasure I got to repeated hearings of this, and it's an ideal Christmas stress-buster, with the added attraction of some lovely full-colour illustrations in the booklet. BC

Millennium: Music from the Middle Ages Ensemble Gilles Binchois, Dominique Vellard 138' 36" (2 CDs) rec 1991 & 1994
Virgin Classics 7243 61640 2 4

The yoking of these two discs is strange, although the same group was responsible for both. The first originally appeared as *Les premiers polyphonies françaises: organa et tropes du XI^e siècle*, about which CB was enthusiastic in *EMR* 20. But the excellent notes by Wulf Arlt have vanished, to be replaced by waffly French notes that don't link the two discs and give absolutely no information about the pieces, let alone anything resembling a text in any language. In the case of the second disc, devoted to the music of Jehan de Lescurel,

which was reviewed in *EMR* 10, that does not matter quite so much, since with recent discoveries on the life of Jehan de Lescurel, it avoids inaccurate information – though texts are still needed. This absence of documentation does a disservice to the product, which is very good, particularly the Jehan de Lescurel disc, which I listened to several times. Again I have to hang my head in shame, admitting that I knew hardly any of it; but I was captivated by some lovely singing, both solo and ensemble. Obviously the polyphony on disc 1 is rather more austere in nature, but I didn't enjoy it any less for that. Performances of this material either inspire reflection and inner harmony or drive one to distraction with irritating performance quirks: Ensemble Gilles Binchois touched the right chords in me every time. BC

16th CENTURY

Byrd Early Latin Church Music; Propers for Epiphany (The Byrd Edition 3) The Cardinal's Musick, Andrew Carwood, David Skinner
ASV Gaudeamus CD GAU 179

Benigne fac Domine, Christe qui lux, Circumspice Jerusalem, Domine ante te, Domine Deus omnipotens, Petrus beatus, Reges Tharsis, Sacris solemnis, Te lucis ante terminum; Epiphany propers (1607); Monte Super flumina Babilonis & Byrd's response Quomodo cantabimus

I have thoroughly enjoyed the previous two issues in this complete series and I was not disappointed by the latest release. It begins very well indeed, with the glorious 6-part *Domine ante te omne desiderium*: wonderfully balanced singing, phrases beautifully shaped and dove-tailed! The highlights of the recording (for me, at any rate) were Philippe de Monte's *Super flumina* and Byrd's response *Quomodo cantabimus*. I just sat back and let The Cardinal's Musick wash over me – it's a amazing sound just to wallow in. An inspiration, indeed, to all singers of this repertoire. BC

Although BC doesn't usually review renaissance polyphony, he sings it and is particularly well grounded in Byrd's church music from having typeset Jon Dixon's edition of the Gradualia. CB

Marcetto Cara ed altri compositori del primo rinascimento italiano: Cigni, Capre, Galli e Grilli: Musiche del bestiario rinascimentale Fortuna Ensemble, Roberto Cascia dir 61' 58" Tactus TC 460301

Music by Cara, Dalza, Josquin, Patavino, Pesenti, Pifaro, Tromboncino, Zesso & anon

This is a thoroughly dreadful recording! The theme is a musical version of a bestiary, and what a fantastic range of beastly sounds they produce. There's the out-of-tune recorder (which seems to be *de rigueur* this month), the screeching singer, that slightly less common sound, the flat whistler... I couldn't work out if I was

supposed to laugh or to take the venture seriously. I have to confess that I could bear no more than four tracks: yes, that's right, all of the above-listed horrors were crammed into just over 10 minutes' music! Not for the faint-hearted. BC

Pierre de la Rue *Missa cum iucunditate; motets by Clemens non Papa, Josquin, Ockeghem, Willaert* Henry's Eight 60' 20" Etcetera KTC 1214
Clemens *Ego flos campi, Pater peccavi*; Josquin *Absolve quæsumus*; Ockeghem *Ave Maria*; Willaert *O crux splendor*

This excellent young ensemble gives a consistently capable account of these mass movements and interspersed motets. As usual with this group, there is a tremendous sense of ensemble, a very high standard of intonation, perfect blend and a beautiful, mellow sound. The altos Declan Costello and William Towers provide a masterclass in flawlessly modulated and controlled falsetto singing. While the group sounds most at home in the sonorous textures of Adrian Willaert's *O crux splendor*, generally speaking they cope well with the ranges of approaches demanded by the different texts and compositional styles featured in music spanning almost a century, although the occasionally aggressive account of parts of the Kyrie, Gloria and Credo of the mass seems a little overdone. It is surprising to see such an accomplished ensemble recording for yet another label (although all credit to Etcetera for securing their services): I would have thought that one of the larger labels would have clasped them to its bosom with bands of steel! D. James Ross

Luzzaschi *Quinto libro de' madrigali, 1595* La Venexiana 69' 16"
Glossa GCD 920905

To present a recording of 27 madrigals, averaging two minutes each, is no easy task: there is no time to get into each piece, either for singers or audience, for whom this is like eating 27 Belgian chocolates in quick succession – the more mediocre get forgotten, although they would have been appreciated singly as complete mouthfuls of richness. There are moments to be savoured in each piece, such as the whispering *sospiri* in *Itene a volo*, as the individual voices run up the scale leaving the 's's' at the bottom. There is considerable harmonic interest, although the 'naughty' chords and progressions are used more subtly than by Gesualdo, an admirer and imitator of Luzzaschi. The alternative versions of four madrigals (from *Madrigali a uno, due e tre soprani*) are interesting to compare, and add variety to the programme. The facsimile of the tenor part of the five-part version of *Aura ch'errando intorno*, printed in the booklet, reveals the clue to the whole performance: tempo and rhythm are quite free, with extended rests, to add to the drama of these little vignettes – after the manner described by Frescobaldi in 1615. The result is usually quite successful, and only occasionally disastrous, when all sense of rhythm is lost. Some moments of perfec-

tion are missed: the three high voices just fail to enter together for *Lungi da te*, from which the rest of the piece has no time to recover. The voices are not first-class, and start to jar after a while; but take this recording in small mouthfuls and there is much to enjoy, including three madrigals from later collections. Selene Mills

Marenzio *Motectorum pro festis totius anni 1585, parte seconda (23-42)* Insieme vocale e strumentale di Progetto Musica, Giulio Monaco dir 60' 31"
Tactus TC551302

This is a very pleasant disc, with extremely competent accounts of 24 short but engaging pieces by the ever-inventive Luca Marenzio. The vocalists sing well and idiomatically, although the soprano Simona Nicolo occasionally over-articulates phrases in the manner of a vocal exercise. The organ support is effective and this instrument is also permitted small decorated commentaries on the music, which work very well. Also pleasing is the playing of a diverse consort of stringed instruments – violino, violetta, viola tenore, violoncino, violoncello, violone and viola da gamba! It is something of a disappointment that, in spite of the suggestion in the name of the group, we never hear the full vocal and instrumental forces together, although they make distinguished contributions on their own accounts. I am also at a loss to account for the title of the disc, as the source is more comprehensibly entitled *Motecta festorum totius anni...* D. James Ross

Marenzio *Sacrae cantiones a 5, 6, 7 voci* Progetto Musica, Giulio Monaco dir 52' 12"
Tactus TC 551304

This is a welcome third disc in a series recording all Marenzio's sacred music for this year's quatercentenary. The pieces recorded here were mainly published posthumously in 1616 but are said by the editor to have been works of Marenzio's youth. On the other hand, some show a high level of sophistication which would suggest Rome in the late 1570s or early 1580s. To those who only know Marenzio as a madrigalist, this disc (and the others in the series: see also *EMR* 48, March 1999) will come as a revelation. The singing is clean, with one voice to a part and some organ and viol accompaniment. Some pieces show the emotional intensity of Lasso in the harmony, while *Hic est Martinus a7* equals if not surpasses Palestrina's *Tu es Petrus* for the same forces. My only quibble is in the use of the harpsichord, played by the director. The aim is to make the music sound as it might have been sung in the early 17th century, and harpsichords were used in Roman oratories but not, I think, to accompany imitative polyphony like this. I found it increasingly irritating, particularly in an alternim hymn found only in a papal chapel choirbook. That aside, this is an important recording and well worth having. Noel O'Regan

£ = bargain price ££ = mid-price

Palestrina *Missa Ecce ego Joannes* The Choir of Westminster Cathedral, James O'Donnell 65' 07"

Hyperion CDA677099

+ *Cantantibus organis, Laudate pueri a8, Magnificat 4^a toni, Peccantem me quotidie, Tu es Petrus a7, Tribulationes civitatum*

Having recently listened to a lot of low-pitch and one-per-part Palestrina on disc, this recording reminded me of more traditional approaches. Here pitch is mainly equalised at a tone above modern standard, with pieces in *chiavette* transposed down a minor third or a tone, and those in standard clefs up a tone. This is what I do myself and the result is bright and allows the lower voices to come through clearly. On the other hand, what we know of Roman pitch would suggest A=440 and I have recently gotten to like the lower sonorities. The choir here is also quite large (ten tenors) which gives a very full sound. That said, the Westminster choir is always completely convincing in this music, which has mainly been chosen for its sonority, and there is the usual wonderfully committed singing. It is also mainly music which has not previously been so well recorded. The six-voice mass is typical of later Palestrina in exploiting texture; the lesser-recorded *Tu es Petrus a7* and *Laudate pueri a8* show Palestrina working towards, but not yet achieving, the polychoral idiom. *Tribulationes civitatum* and *Peccantem me quotidie* have something of Lasso about them and reflect the Lenten devotional milieu of Roman oratories. This is a very satisfying recording indeed.

Noel O'Regan

This is the last of James O'Donnell's recordings of early repertoire at the Cathedral: it will be interesting to see what he does at the Abbey. CB

The Fitzwilliam Virginal Book: transcriptions for a mixed consort Charivari agréable 70' 17"
Signum SIGCD009

To be reviewed by Ian Harwood in the next issue.

Vespro di Natale de' più eccellenti musici della Patria del Friuli Gruppo Vocale Dumbliis e Puemas, Ensemble Strumentale Tiepolo, Sandro Bergamo dir 48' 30"

Rivo Alto CRR 9902

Music by G. M. Asola, I. Baccusi, I. Camaterò, G. Ferretti, T. Graziani, A. Gualtieri

This is an extremely interesting recording, featuring six composers whose music is almost completely unknown. The CD is strictly constructed around the service of First Vespers for Christmas Day, with brief plainsong antiphons to the five psalms, a Marian antiphon (*Salve Regina*), a hymn (the only piece written by a non-Friulian composer, but included by virtue of the fact that it is included in one of the area's cathedral collections in the context of just such a service), a single instrumental piece and a concluding Christmas motet. The performances are very good, with fairly focused singing and light instrumental contributions. It is not absolutely outstanding, but the music is very worthwhile and this would make an attractive, if unusual present come December. BC

17th CENTURY

Cavalieri *Rappresentazione di Anima e di Corpo* Soloists, Kammerchor & Instrumental-ensemble der Salzburger Festspiele, Ernst Maerzendorfer 91' 44" (2 CDs in box) Orfeo C 517 992 1 (rec 1973)

I have been asked several times by Beresford King-Smith to offer a recommendation for a recording to those wishing to hear this work before the 400th anniversary course next spring. I don't think I have heard all that were or are available, and cannot compare this with the Archiv/Mackerras recording from roughly the same date. But this can safely be ignored by those wanting a performance that fits contemporary ideas of the historically informed. (I think the best performance in that respect is the Californian-based one on Koch 3-7363-2, reviewed in *EMR* 27, Feb 1997, p. 18, though it is not entirely satisfactory.) This is far more interesting as a historical document in its own right. Amazingly, the work was performed regularly at the Salzburg Festival from 1968 to 1973, this being a radio recording from 1973. As such, it does not do justice to the apparently spacious spread of performers in the Kollegienkirche. Singing styles and instrumentation are outmoded (though would anyone have done any better anywhere else?) but a glimmer of what seem to have been inspiring performances comes through. Don't buy it as your only recording, but it an interesting document. The booklet is more about the Salzburg tradition than the work itself, and the text is not translated (not even into German). CB

Lindum Records have copies of the Koch disc in stock for those involved in next spring's Interfora weekend who wish to buy a recording.

Charpentier *Le massacre des innocents* (H411), *Psaumes de David* La Simphonie du Marais, Hugo Reyne, Ensemble Vocal Contrepoint, Olivier Schneebeli 66' 42" Accord 241972 (rec 1990)

Also includes *Beatus vir* (H221), *Confitebor* (H220), *Exurgat Deus* (H215), *Graciarum actiones* (H326) *Laetatus sum* (H216), *Super flumina Babylonis* (H170)

This seems to be a re-issue of a disc previously issued on a different label in 1990, with nothing on the packaging to show that the soloists include Véronique Gens and Jean-Paul Fouchécourt. The programme overlaps in two cases with the Naxos Charpentier series previously reviewed in *EMR*, though should not be passed over on those grounds as the remaining works are full of interest and often feature the composer at his best – the first few bars of *Super flumina Babylonis*, for instance; this has some lovely singing from Véronique Gens which is not, unfortunately, always equalled by her partners in this solo ensemble. The choral sound is generally a relaxed one, which often brings clarity to the faster and more complex passages, but which in gentler music can sound tentative or just plain flat. The

revelation of the recital is the thanksgiving motet on the recovery of the Dauphin from a bout of fever (H326), a substantial *pièce d'occasion* offering a rare baroque outing to a bass recorder (as well as two trebles, continuo and three singers). Both this and the ensuing 'oratorio' are fine music and provoke the most consistently satisfying performances, despite some unnecessary over-gilding of the instrumental parts and some anxious choral moments. The booklet gives the full Latin texts, but only translates them into French; notes are also in English and German.

David Hansell

Lully *Grands Motets Vol. 1* Le Concert Spirituel, Hervé Niquet 58' 26" Naxos 8.554397

Miserere, Plaudite laetare Gallia, Te Deum

This release is yet another created under the auspices of the Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles, recorded in 1993 but only now, it seems, available on general release. In the *Miserere*, his first grand motet, Lully was on superb form and one can readily understand the enthusiasm of its first audience, which is likely to be matched by listeners to this performance. The varied forces are well integrated and well balanced, though in the *Te Deum* nowhere near the size of those performing under the composer's direction when he inflicted upon himself the famous fatal injury! In this work it is the incisive choral singing that makes the strongest impression, though Peter Harvey's solos display his characteristic control. The short motet in honour of the Dauphin which completes the programme shares these virtues. I have not always been a fan of this ensemble, but I enjoyed this and look forward to further volumes. David Hansell

Lully *Suite from Atys, La Folie d'Espagne, Suite from Proserpine* La Bande des Hautbois du Roi, Paolo Tognon cond 51' 50" Nuovo Era CD 7331

The Italy-based band is making its first recorded foray into this repertoire, though individually the members will, in many cases, be familiar to *EMR* readers. The sound of a reed ensemble was far from unknown in later 17th-century France and, of course, they played the hits of the day as well as dance music. Out-of-doors, this rich five-part sonority must sound impressive, though in my home it does seem a bit rough and ready, particularly with regard to some of the tuning. I also doubt the desirability as well as the content of some of the percussion parts. Nonetheless, it is good to have these colourful versions of the music available and there are some moments of real charm and humour. (The recorder introduction to the *Air pour les trompettes*, for example, amused me, but does raise questions of historical plausibility.) Notes are in Italian and English.

David Hansell

Merula *Canzoni e Sonate* Collegium Pro Musica, Stefano Bagliano 61' 26" Dynamic CDS 191

One of several CDs this month combining violin, recorder (of various sizes), stringed bass and keyboards – and certainly not the best from a tuning point of view! It is so easy to overblow a descant recorder and give it that biting edge which grates on the ear. Some of the pieces with gamba and violin are lovely, such as the *Sonata Seconda* with theorbo continuo. The violinist is slightly casual with some of the shorter notes, and some phrase endings are rather curtailed, but there is a certain understanding between the players. The tremolo passage should have been controlled to a far greater degree, and more care taken over the ensuing overlapping entries. Try as I might, I just could not cope with *La Merula* on descant recorder and bassoon: impressive as some of the tonguing is, there is an overwhelming disparity of tone between the instruments and (dare I say it?) the recorder's passagework is considerably better than the dulcian's, and its tuning is rather better than elsewhere, too! The organ continuo works very well here. BC

van Noordt *Tabulatuur-boeck van psalmen en fantasyen* (1659), *Part I* Peter Ouwkerk (organ of the Nieuwe Kerk, Haarlem) 65' 59" Naxos 8.554204 £

Rarely has the link between liturgical practice and organ music been so exposed as in van Noordt's 1659 publication of fantasies and variations on psalm melodies. Earlier in the same year, Huygens' treatise on the use of the organ was published in Amsterdam. It drew attention to the weakness of unaccompanied singing (as had been the custom since 1619), likening the result to 'ugly snoring... howling or screaming'. Although accompanied singing had to wait until 1680 before the Amsterdam magistrates agreed to it, they did give orders for organists and carillonists to improvise variations of psalm melodies so that the congregation would at least get to know the melody. That explains the generally unornamented nature of chorale/psalm melodies in music of the period, although Sweelinck had developed the style earlier. Like Sweelinck, van Noordt can sound somewhat severe, but that does not reduce the powerful effect of their organ writing. Hans van Nieuwkoop (Ouwkerk's teacher) has shown that the only organ in Amsterdam capable of accommodating the keyboard range of van Noordt's pieces was the smaller organ mounted on a pillar about half way down the nave of the Oude Kerk (only the case and a few pipes remain today). This CD uses the very similar organ in Haarlem's Nieuwe Kerk. Peter Ouwkerk is clearly totally at one with this repertoire. Another Naxos success. Andrew Benson-Wilson

Pachelbel *The Complete Organ Works, Vol. 6* Joseph Payne (Johann Andreas Zuberbier organ, 1769, St. Petri, Steinwedel) 73' 27" Centaur CRC 2383

Aria in D, Fugue in e, Fugues on Magnificat I toni, nos. 11-23, Prelude & Fugue in G, Toccata & Fugue in D, Partite Erbarm dich mein, Ich hab mein Sach Gott heimgestellt, Ich ruf zu dir I & II, Komm Gott

Schöpfer heiliger Geist, Nun laßt uns Gott, Wenn mein Stündlein vorhanden ist, Werde munter mein Gemüte

Pachelbel's music is often attractive but occasionally insubstantial. It is difficult to put together a CD-length programme of his pieces without having an overall theme or structure. Although Payne is to be commended on using historic instruments for his frequent recordings, his technique rarely does the organ or the music any favours. One of the challenges of such instruments is the absolute need to be sensitive in terms of touch and articulation – that is the foundation of organ playing of any period, but its neglect will be cruelly exposed on a historically inspired organ. To discover this is an enlightening experience, and can bring untold insights into early music. *Andrew Benson-Wilson*

Pasquini *Variationi e Partite* (1702) Silvia Rambaldi *hpscd* 73' 57"
Tactus TC 631801

The ten pieces on this disc, all of them variation sets of one type or another, are drawn from the 1702 Staatsbibliothek manuscript collection in Berlin. They reveal Pasquini as a creative and dynamic keyboard composer, and form the basis of what is a most enjoyable CD. Pasquini's roots lie in the music of Palestrina and Frescobaldi – there are unmistakable references to the latter hidden away in one or two of the variations – but the music is, in many ways, strikingly advanced and full of surprises. There is a wide range of exciting, driving figuration in the accompaniment, compact, logical Corellian structures, and some rather avant-garde features such as the long held trills of the 11th variation in the A minor set. Silvia Rambaldi really does justice to this fine music – her style is uncomplicated, colourful and insightful. The delightfully full yet intimate acoustic and exemplary sound quality also helps to make this disc an outstanding and very worthwhile purchase. *Robin Bigwood*

Henry Purcell *Works for Harpsichord* John Gibbons 69' 03" (rec 1995)
Centaur CRC 2313
Z646-50, 653, 655-6, 660-663, 665-669, ZD 221-2, ZT 681-2, 688-9, 694-5

John Gibbons expounds his philosophical approach to these works in some notably chatty and idiosyncratic programme notes. His assertion that this is 'music to enjoy at home: to play yourself, on a spinet or a stereo' is reflected by a performance style which perhaps recreates average domestic performance standards rather too well – there are bungled ornaments aplenty, and some of the dance movements in the suites are terribly rushed. The recorded sound is gutsy but a little harsh, and it is hard to decide what sort of instrument we're hearing (there is no information in the notes). Whatever it is, it doesn't sound very big, is not particularly endearing, and its treble, though plaintive in quality, tends towards brittleness. It's not all bad – I enjoyed all the grounds, and, indeed,

some of the more introspective suites are handled with sensitivity. Gibbons has clearly not been afraid to put forward some highly personal interpretations, but I feel generally that there is a fundamental lack of sophistication and subtlety that precludes this disc acquiring any great status or reputation. A curiosity, but not without character. *Robin Bigwood*

A. Scarlatti *Cantate da camera* Cristina Miatello S, Gloria Banditelli A, Ensemble Aurora 68' 53"
Tactus TC 661905
with bc: *Andante o miei sospiri, Per un solo momento, Lascia più di tormentarmi, Lontan dalla sua Clori*
with 2 vlins & bc *Bella madre de' fiori*

This is a self-effacing disc, which declines to say whose was the guiding hand behind the enterprise. The transcription by the Italian copyist of the very brief programme notes is too hilarious to impart any sense. There is nothing about the performers, no translation, only incomplete texts, and no argument to support the recording: the performance has to speak for itself. In the first two cantatas, the *cantabile* cello of Andrea Fossà does this better than the tired-sounding Miatello, who uses constant vibrato, starts all her trills on the lower note, and is careless with some intervals. Her singing is distressingly enervating: it is only in the livelier recitatives that she seems to put any energy or thought into her performance. By the third piece, the cello and harpsichord have become infected by her lassitude, and it is a huge relief when a rhythmic section briefly interrupts the somniferous chromaticism. There is plenty to enjoy in the music, which is inventive and even daring in places, but incomplete libretti and imperfect diction make it hard to tell how well the notes match the words. In contrast, Banditelli brings commitment and clarity to her singing, helped by Ensemble Aurora, whose dark string sound (was this piece transposed down for the alto?) matches her extraordinary voice. Her single cantata lasts for nearly half an hour, and is the best reason for buying this CD. *Selene Mills*

Weckmann *Organ Works Vol. 2* Wolfgang Zerer (St. Jacobi, Hamburg) 69' 48"
Naxos 8.553859 £

Those of you who have already bought Vol 1 of this Weckmann series will need no further encouragement to buy this. It is through CDs like this, and their other inspired volumes of lesser known organ masters, that Naxos are finally shaking off their cheap and cheerful image. The only thing missing, from a production point of view, is a note of the registrations used. Weckmann is a composer well worth getting to know: one of the key links between the generation of Sweelinck pupils and Buxtehude, his organ and choral music is vigorous and dramatic and steeped in the religious piety of his time. This CD includes four of his major choral variation sets (including the massive *O lux beata trinitas*), contrasted nicely with

smaller scale Italianate Canzons and a Toccata. The playing is generally sound, although I question the rather mannered and curious articulation of the opening theme of the *Fuga*, cutting across the obvious metrical hierarchy of the motif. The organ is the one for which Weckmann wrote much of his music, albeit in Arp Schnitger's later repackaging of much of the pipework from the Scherer/Fritzsche organ known by Weckmann. The recording is not as closely miked as some others, given a slightly foggy bloom, but the detail is there and the aural perspective is realistic. With our ears and brains numbed by constant noise, it is all too easy to forget the sound world of our predecessors. In a Hamburg without lorries or discos, the sound of the full 32' pleno of the Jacobikirche organ (track 22) must have been awe-inspiring, one of the loudest sounds that most people would hear in their lifetime. *Andrew Benson-Wilson*

Affetti e danze (Flights of Fancy): early Italian music on original instruments Icarus Ensemble 57' 48"
Claves CD 50-9817
Castello, Cazzati, Falconiero, Frescobaldi, Kapsberger, Marini, Turini

Original instruments, perhaps, but that isn't enough for a 'historically informed' performance. The combination of recorder, violin and cello is such an implausible one for the repertoire here that the members, all highly proficient (there is a plucker and a keyboarder as well), should either move on a century or reform. There is really only room for one top-level ensemble playing music of this period with this eccentric combination. I am also puzzled at the statement that Roman pitch was A=440: isn't that a tone or so too high? That said, if you can take the recorder at the wrong octave and not really matching the violin in the way a cornett can, the playing is very fine; Icarus understands the music and plays it well, if a little less overtly expressive than some ensembles. *CB*

*according to Doni (1640), though Noel O'Regan reckons on A=440 for Palestrina (see p. 19).

Cantata da camera Greta De Reyghere S, Telemann Consort 60' 38"
Vox Temporis VTP CD92 042
A. M. & G Bononcini, Prosile, A Scarlatti & anon

The linking feature here is the prominence of the recorder: the first and last of the five cantatas, in fact, have two. The instrumental playing is actually very good. Sadly, the last few times I've heard Greta de Reyghere sing have not been as enjoyable as when I first came across her, when she sang with Belgium's Ricercar Ensemble. The texts are given in the original Italian only. *BC*

Flos florum: Italian Vespers in Bohemia, c. 1650 The Prague Chamber Singers 73' 17"
Panton 81 9014-2-231
Music by G. Ganassi, T. Merula, G. Marinoni, Palestrina, G. A. Rigatti, J. Simbracky(?) & anon
see p. 11.

Great European Organs No. 55 Konstantin Reymaier (Arp Schnitger organ of St. Jacobi, Hamburg) 65' 41"

Priority **PRCD 607**

Bach *Toccata in C* (BWV 566); Buxtehude *Mit Fried und Freud* (BuxWV 76); Scheidemann *Verbum caro factum est*; Tunder *Praeludium in g*, *Was kann uns kommen*; Weckmann *Canzon in C*, *Nun freut euch*

Six years after its restoration, this magnificent organ still attracts the recording companies. The latest offering is courtesy of a young Austrian organist who has spent the last five years in Oxford, researching theology. Indeed, there is much of the theological about Reymaier's carefully wrought and intensely argued playing – there is no sign here of hell-fire and brimstone preaching. Speeds are reflective and registrations moderate and colourful. The opening *Praeludium* by Buxtehude's predecessor, Tunder, is interpreted as a sombre dirge with the 16' Quintadehn and Dulcian prominent. The programme is a fascinating compilation of pieces from Scheidemann to Bach, all the composers having some connection with St Jacobi. It is particularly good to hear one of Scheidemann's lesser-known chorale intabulations (on Hassler's *Verbum caro factum est*), Buxtehude's *Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin* and Tunder's massive fantasia on *Was kann uns kommen an für Not*. Recommended. *Andrew Benson-Wilson*

If Love's a sweet passion: Songs & Musicke for Violins from the court masques and theatres of C17 London Sara Macliver S, Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, Paul Dyer dir ABC Classics *Antipodes* 456 692-2

What an absolute gem of a disc! Sara Macliver has a marvellous voice, which can soar to the heights with the greatest of ease, and declaim a text, colouring individual notes beautifully. She's accompanied here with great imagination and absolute affinity by Paul Dyer. The Australian Brandenburg Orchestra opens the disc with a lively account of a piece by Robert Johnson with some brilliant ornamentation. The next purely instrumental piece is a *Fantasie* by Thomas Lupo, which they opt to play without continuo, which sounds slightly strange, but elsewhere (throughout a century's worth of incidental music), they are thoroughly convincing. They make a brighter sound than the King's Noyse (there are sometimes three violins on each part with doubled violas and cellos) and the recording is also very much towards the bright end of the spectrum. On the darker side, listen to the *Curtain Tune* from Locke's music in *The Tempest* – it's a mystery regained, the sudden entry (and just as sudden exit!) of the harpsichord a stroke of genius; there's also a hint of note-bending and swelling here, which is entirely convincing (and it's not often you'll hear me say that!) For a fresh view on music of this period, don't miss this recording! *BC*

I share BC's enthusiasm, but had just a slight unease, perhaps because the approach (and presumably instruments) are more suited to the latter part of the century than the earlier. CB

With charming notes: songs and instrumental music Christine Brandes S, Arcadian Academy, Mary Springfels *gamba*, Nicholas McGegan 75' 55" (rec 1994)

Harmonia Mundi *Suite* HMT 7907 167 ££

The cover quotes a commendation from *EMR* (from Stephen Daw, in fact) of the original issue: 'Among the most stylish performances I have heard on disc of Purcell's instrumental music.' There is no need to say more, except that Christine Brandes is also stylish. *CB*

LATE BAROQUE

Bach Organ Works Vol. 1 Gerhard Weinberger (Gottfried-Silbermann Organ, Dom St. Marien, Freiberg, 1711-14) 73' 15" cpo 999 663 2

BWV 531, 533, 549, 551, 690-1, 694-701, 703-4, 706, 709-713

Bach Organ Works Vol. 2 Gerhard Weinberger (Gottfried-Silbermann Organ, St. Petri, Freiberg, 1734-35) 72' 25" cpo 999 664 2 ££

BWV 541, 546, 651-658

I am afraid I had trouble getting past the first few notes of the first piece on these CDs. Playing a mordent as a sort of filigree filling of the gap between two notes is not only stylistically inaccurate, but muddies the pulse, particularly in the case of the monodic opening of BWV549, which starts with a mordent. The unfortunate Herr Weinberger never really recovered from this early setback. Every track has some sort of stylistic or interpretational oddity that stopped me in my tracks. The Freiberg Dom organ (accurately described by Bach's predecessor at the Thomaskirche at Leipzig as 'uncommonly magnificent') is one of the finest in the world. Despite its important location, it was one of Silbermann's first instruments – the organ at St Petri (CD2) was one of his last. These two organs are closer to the organ that Bach knew than most other organs of the period, but both organs deserve better playing than this – as does Herr Bach. (On Weinberger's Krebs, see p. 25.)

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Bach Vom Himmel hoch (BWV 769), *Preludes & Fugues* BWV 546 & 548, *Toccatas* BWV 911 & 914 (*The Works for Organ*, vol. 11) Kevin Bowyer (Marcussen organ at Sct. Hans Kirke, Odense). 113' (2 CDs) Nimbus NI 5606/7

This is a fascinating collection of lesser known Bach (and not-Bach) pieces and works normally considered (often incorrectly) as harpsichord pieces. However CD1 also includes the meatier mainstream fare of the Great E minor and C minor Preludes and Fugues and the Canonic Variations on *Von Himmel hoch*. Kevin Bowyer is not an acknowledged exponent of 'early performance' techniques, and this is occasionally apparent in his playing. Touch and articulation veer towards the neo-baroque and speeds are frequently frenetic (although I have to admire his

ability to play with such technical virtuosity). He also uses a modern instrument not built on specific historic principals and lacking many of the features that make 'authentic performance' so compelling. But that said, this is thrilling and musically communicative playing, and I can forgive much for that. As with his Vol 10, the gentler pieces are the most persuasive, but few listeners, however fundamentalist they might be about early performance practice, could fail to appreciate the rhythmic strength and vitality of Bowyer's playing. *Andrew Benson-Wilson*

Bach Orgelbüchlein Anne Page (organ of Trinity College, Cambridge), Cambridge Voices, Ian de Massini dir 111' 33 (2 CDs)

Merlin **MER99108CD**

Organ chorales interspersed with seasonal vocal settings by Bach, J & M Praetorius, Scheidt & chant, with Eccard (*When to the Temple Mary went*), Lotti (*Crucifixus* a8), P. Philips (*Ascendit Deus*), D. Scarlatti & Vivaldi, mostly sung in English.

Bach's *Orgelbüchlein* is not easy to record, with its large number of short pieces, each demanding a distinctive mood. This CD has contrasted them with a wide variety of chorale excerpts sung by Cambridge Voices, an 18-strong amateur choir. Although this makes for variety, it does cause some difficulty in knowing where to place the market for this CD. A double CD of the *Orgelbüchlein* is presumably aimed at more than the Chapel gift store market, but the style of the vocal interpolations suggest that as the aim. Many of the pieces are sung in English – and in the precise, Oxbridge Chapel manner that does not always do them justice. The acoustic of choir and organ is different (recorded in different churches) and there is occasionally a pitch difference between the end of a choral track and the organ. Some might be put off by a CD that announces on its cover that the performance is 'masterful and enlightened' (not a quote from a reviewer, but presumably the performer's or record company's own assessment). That would be a shame, because Anne Page's playing is committed and thoughtful and shows a good grounding in early performance technique. Buy for the playing, but you might want to skip the vocal tracks. For a far more successful organ/chorale mix, see the following review.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Bach Kyrie, Gott Vater in Ewigkeit: Great Organ Mass (Clavier-übung III) Leo van Doeselaar (Bader-Timpe organ, St Walburg's Church, Zutphen), Choir of the Netherlands Bach Society, Jos van Veldhoven Channel Classics CCS 13498 107' 12" 2 CDs Includes vocal settings of chorales by Hassler, Scheidt, Schein, Schütz, etc.

With the plethora of Bach CDs pouring onto the market at the moment, it is a relief to come across one that has a genuinely new approach. We are used to hearing Bach chorale preludes with their a capella chorales, but this CD also includes concerted pieces on each chorale with continuo organ and cello. The unison chorales are generally from the *Neu Leipziger Gesang-*

buch (1682), and composers represented include Schütz, Michael Praetorius, Schein, Scheidt and Hassler. The chorale pieces are beautifully sung, and frequently predict the mood of the succeeding organ piece (like the polyphonic opening Kyrie). Listen to the soprano lines of Schein's *Allein Gott* as they tumble over each other, or the rich bass lines in Praetorius's *Dies sind die heiligen zehn Gebot*. The Zutphen organ is a new one for me. Much of the pipework is from the Bader instrument of 1643, with some sympathetic additions by Timpe in 1815. It makes a magnificently rich sound – I do envy the Dutch for their abundance of fine historic organs. Leo van Doeselaar plays with superb attention to the detail of articulation (using the generous acoustic effectively) and effective management of the organ's responsive winding. An excellent CD.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Bach Organ cornucopia Christopher Herrick (on Metzler organ of Pfarrkirche St Michael, Kaisten, Switzerland) 75' 20"

Hyperion CDA67139

BWV 531, 562ii, 567, 571, 573, 580, 584, 591, 597-8, 723, 741, 743, 747, 753-5, 758, 762, 764-5, 946, Anh.55

Having worked through the bulk of Bach's organ works, Christopher Herrick now turns his attention to those often ignored little gems, some incomplete, many possibly not by Bach, that are nonetheless an important part of our understanding of the musical environment within which Bach worked. They are generally attractive and approachable pieces – indeed, this CD could safely be given to organist friends as they are unlikely to know many of the pieces. Herrick's love affair with Metzler organs continues, although I wonder if some of his interpretations in this Bach series would have been improved by the challenge of working with historic instruments. His romantic and neo-baroque roots are certainly fading, and he delivers some thoughtful performances, although the early C major Prelude and Fugue feature rather insistent attack and articulation, particularly in the opening pedal solos, and some curious added ornaments in the fugue. Tracks 2 to 6 are all unfinished pieces, so this is probably a CD to dip into, or else skip to track 7.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Bach Orgelwerke im Dom zu Berlin Michael Pohl (großen Sauer-Orgel) 67' 10"

Motette CD 12511

BWV 532, 548, 582, 645, 654, 657, 668

My heart sank when I saw this CD. What on earth was somebody doing recording Bach on this huge romantic organ? I have only heard it once, and that was through a locked door as somebody was practising for a concert just after the collapse of the Berlin Wall. I am sure that parts of my body are still reverberating since that experience. The German romantic organ of this period is closer to its classical ancestors than its distant Edwardian cousin and, although Pohl uses most of the resources of the organ, he does so with restraint, and his rather old fashioned

playing rather suits the organ. Not an obvious CD for *EMR* readers, but organ buffs might allow themselves a listen, if only to compare this interpretation of BWV548 with Kevin Bowyer's or the thundering final bars of the Passacaglia.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Bach The Great Toccatas Bernard Foccroulle (on various historic organs) 72' 43"

Ricercar 206122 (rec 1982-92)

BWV 538, 564, 565, 582, 590, 622, 645

Bach Zugeschriebene Werke Bernard Foccroulle (Thomas organ of L'Abbaye de Leffe) Ricercar 246822 72' 31"

BWV 553-560, 568, 576, 583, 585-7, 591, 740, 745, 747, 762, Anh.55.

The second of these is the final CD in a complete Bach series, although it is the first one to be sent for review in *EMR*. In fact none of the pieces recorded are by Bach, although many have been attributed to him at some point. The best known pieces will be the young organist's nightmare – the 8 *Short Preludes and Fugues*. Despite their *Für Elise* status, these are actually pleasant little essays (probably by Johann Tobias Krebs or his better-known son) in the emerging Galant/Rococo style. Foccroulle's interpretations are straightforward rather than adventurous. The organ is the recently completed reinterpretation of Gottfried Silbermann's 1741 Grosshartmannsdorf organ. Also released is 'The Great Toccatas', the inaccurate title of a compilation CD of some of Foccroulle's Bach series dating back to 1982. Although the organs are interesting, the recording quality (and occasionally, the performing quality and style) are dated.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Andreas Bach Manuscript: Keyboard Music from the Bach household at Ohrdruf played on historic organs of Thuringia and Saxony Joseph Payne *org & hpcsd* 63' 48"

Koch Discover International D1CD 920591

BWV 570, 820, 921+Anh 205, 949 & music by Armsdorff, Böhm, Buttstedt, Küchenthal, Pestel, Pollarolo, Ritter & anon

The Andreas Bach MS is best known for providing us with Bach's great Passacaglia and Fugue and Böhm's Praeludium, Fugue and Postludium (the latter included on this CD). Collected between 1703/13 by Bach's eldest brother, Johann Christoph, it has since become identified with its later owner, Johann Christoph's son. Joseph Payne's touch and articulation does the music no favours, and his interpretation approaches the frivolous at times. But it has to be said that some of pieces are not of the best. It is a shame that more information is not given about the organs used, or which piece is on which organ. A curious medley.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Bach An Italian Concert: Six Concertos after Vivaldi, Italian Concerto BWV 971 Olivier

Baumont 60' 34"

Erato 3984-25504-2

BWV 971-3, 975-6, 978, 980

[Vivaldi op. 3/3, 9, 12; op. 4/1, 6; op. 7 II/2]

Olivier Baumont's recordings keep on getting better, and this one's a real cracker. Visually, the disc and its packaging are highly attractive, and happily the beauty is more than just skin deep. The quality of playing here is top-notch, and is matched by a full and revealing sound quality. Baumont has that rare ability, reminiscent of Bob van Asperen at his best, to produce intellectually satisfying, uncomplicated performances which utterly transcend the music's difficulties, all the while retaining an unshakable sense of character and an irresistibly joyful outlook on things. As a listener you feel you're in good hands – the music is presented naturally, with almost a spirit of generosity and benevolence. There's plenty to be entertained by, not least a superb copy of a 1735 Silbermann school double by Anthony Sidey and Frederic Bal. The Vivaldi transcriptions are nicely done – excitingly handled but not overstated; but inevitably it is the Italian Concerto itself that forms the centrepiece of the disc. This is one of the best recordings I have heard, simply because it does not attempt anything daft but instead just oozes quality. Throughout there is an enviable level of flexibility in phrasing, ornamentation and tempo, but nothing that steps beyond the bounds of acceptability. The central *Andante* is particularly fine. This, then, is harpsichord playing of the highest standard, capable of sustaining repeated listening, and much to be recommended.

Robin Bigwood

Bach Cello Suites Susan Sheppard 142' 40"
Metronome MET CD 1034-35 (2 CDs)

It seems extraordinary that this is the first period-instrument recording of these pieces by a woman – there are so many fine female cellists around – and it's a pity, in some ways, that there are already too many good sets available. (Wispelwey I or II, ter Linden, etc.) and I'm afraid this one won't replace any of those in my collection: despite a wealth of experience, an admirable control of tone and array of bow strokes, there were too many 'fussinesses' for my liking – I tried the opening of the E flat suite (my acid test, as I've mentioned in these pages before) and I just could not feel a steady pulse for several bars; even when the rationale became clear, I was unconvinced that it made actual musical sense, and I just cannot believe that's how Bach heard it. The other most famous prelude (to the G major suite) is far more convincing, and the string crossing is as deft (and its phrasing as musical!) as any recording you'll ever hear. Listening to this repertoire, though, is every bit as subjective an experience as playing it, so I can only recommend that readers should try it for themselves.

BC

Bach Gamba Sonatas, Riddle Preludes, Baroque Perpetua Pieter Wispelwey, Richard Egarr, Daniel Yeadon 59' 17"
Channel Classics CCS 14198

No-one is going to be that surprised to learn that I loved this CD – three times in a

row, to be precise. Wispelwey's thinking through the idea of pre- and post-luding each of the gamba sonatas with a transcription of some other Bach piece is a stroke of genius: where I complained once about his transcription of slow movements from Vivaldi's violin concertos rather than use proper cello pieces or rework some lesser-known operatic arias, I found these versions absolutely right. In the hands of such musicians, few will fail to be enchanted. I've drawn attention elsewhere to the balance and understanding between the two cellists; the keyboard player (on various instruments, which gives another degree of variety to the programme) is, of course, a perfect partner. At just under an hour, this is a relatively short disc, but worth every penny! BC

Bach Harpsichord Concertos vol. 4 The Purcell Quartet, Robert Woolley, Paul Nicholson *hpscd*, Stephen Preston *fl* 59' 47" Chandos Chaconne CHAN 0641
fl, *vlm*, *hpscd* in a BWV 1044, *hpscd* in d BWV 1052, 2 *hpscd* in C BWV 1061

This (presumably final) disc in a series dedicated to the use, where possible, of Mietke harpsichord reproductions, includes the still delightfully fresh Concerto in D minor (BWV1052), now adjudged to be quite a late arrangement, the so-called Triple Concerto, and the last harpsichord double in C major. Stephen Preston's playing shows little influence of his concentration on baroque dancing. The solo concerto failed to draw me into itself as I know it should. Not the best of a previously promising series, sadly. The C major comes off best. Stephen Daw

Bigaglia VII Sonate per flauto dolce e basso continuo I Fiori Musicali (Maria Giovanna Fiorentino *rec*, Paolo Tognon *bsn*, Irena Pahor *gamba*, Roberto Loreggian *hpscd*) 60' 51" Tactus TC 670201

These seven pieces come from the composer's 8 *Sonate per violino o sia Flauto*, and the performers take this as a reason to play them on recorder at printed pitch – the fact that they then choose a descant for the opening piece makes me sceptical right away: it's just too squeaky! Come the second sonata, the soloist has opted for a treble and things improve markedly, although this is the most cello-like gamba playing I've ever heard. The next piece has just (descant) recorder and bassoon to begin with – to my ears, yet another miscalculation: the two instruments simply do not match well enough (and surely if the recorder ornaments the opening phrase, the bassoonist should too). The harpsichordist plays the sections of the slow movement solo, before tutti repeats (a slightly bizarre notion). Undoubtedly interesting repertoire for players of whatever solo instrument, but not the best performance it will ever have. BC

Boyce Complete Trio Sonatas Collegium Musicum 90 (Simon Standage, Micaela Combetti *vlms*, Jane Coe *vlc*, Nicholas Parle

hpscd) 101' 04" 2 CDs for the price of one Chandos Chaconne CHAN 0648(2)

I wonder how I would have reacted, had this been my first hearing of these pieces. That honour goes to Peter Holman's recording on Hyperion, in which he experimented with the idea that Boyce had, in fact, worked the sonatas from orchestral pieces and used a concertino group for passages marked piano and doubled them when the marking was forte. Here, Simon Standage and Co. are on their own, and a fine job they make of it, too. The two fiddles are easily distinguished, though they phrase beautifully as one, and the bass department is no less stylish. Clearly fans of this repertoire cannot afford to be without either version. Highly recommended. BC

Couperin Messe pour les Paroisses Gunnar Svensson (Frobenius 1992 organ of Skelgård Church), Allan Diehl, Grove Madsen, Anders Skovsted *chant* 55' 18" Danacord DACOCD 514 £

I am not sure what the potential audience is for this CD. The tone colour and interpretation of French classical music is so distinctive, and so well understood nowadays, that it cannot be ignored. But that is what has happened in this CD, which uses a small modern Germanic organ, and is played in a style that is far from accepted performance practice. Although there might be some local interest, a CD like this does not stand up to the standards required of national, let alone international release. For collectors of howlers, there are two mistranslations of the organ specification – Rorflojte comes out as 'reed pipe' and Kobbellojte as 'Coupler flute'. I cannot recommend it. Andrew Benson-Wilson

Couperin Messe pour les couvents Marchand Te Deum Helmut Deutsch (Koenig organ, St. Avoild), Ensemble Canticum, Christoph Erkens *cond* 70' 28" Arte Nova Classics 74321 65413 2 £

It is encouraging that more recordings of French classical organ Masses are incorporating the sung plainchant versets that alternate with the organ verses, if not the remaining parts of the Mass (this CD includes the completely chanted Credo). Of Couperin's two well known Organ Masses, the convent mass is more approachable and easier to play – convents were less likely to have a good organist than a parish church (although Couperin's own daughter became a nun and convent organist). Louis Marchand's alternatum setting of the Te Deum is a useful filler – rarely performed, it is perhaps more typical of day to day liturgical organ improvisation than Couperin's finely constructed and more extended pieces. There are a number of minor interpretational matters that I would query: the strong bar-line pulse in the opening Plein Jeu, and other similar movements, where a more flowing style would have been closer to

contemporary instructions; the pronounced pulling up of the speed at the end of some of the lyrical movements; the odd detachment of the resolution to some trills; and some rather emphatic *notes inégales*, for example, in the Offertoire. And wouldn't female voices be more appropriate for the 'Messe pour les couvents'? Nonetheless particularly at budget price, this is worth a listen. Andrew Benson-Wilson

Handel Aires et danses Tafelmusik, Jeanne Lamon *dir*, Karina Gauvin *S* 76' 21" Analekta *Fleur de lys* FL 2 3137 Excerpts from Agrippina and Alcina

This is a very pleasant CD: with five arias from *Alcina* and four from *Agrippina*, it is quite similar to Hyperion's sets with Emma Kirkby and Roy Goodman. Tafelmusik's excellent playing needs no recommendation from me. The instrumental music (overtures and dances) is taut and stylish, quite virile in Oberto's *Barbara! Io ben lo so*, mellifluous in the ensuing *Ombre pallide*. There is some very nice wind playing. On the whole, Karina Gauvin is convincing in Handel's melismas, but sometimes I felt she tried too hard to differentiate between legato and staccato, and, very occasionally, her quick vibrato made pitch sag slightly. Some attempts to dramatise the text didn't quite come off. BC

Handel Harpsichord Works Vol. 1 (1733) [HWV 434-439] Sophie Yates 67' 08" Chandos Chaconne CHAN 0644

Recordings of Handel's keyboard music tend to concentrate on the suites of the First Collection of 1720 (the 'Eight Great'), but selections from the Second Collection of 1733 appear from time to time. Sophie Yates' own 'Vol. 1' comprises the first six (actually seven) works from the 1733 set in their final order (there was an earlier, more confused, issue) and suggests she intends to complete the set on a future CD. There is room for such an approach, but unlike the 1720 set, the 1733 set is a loosely assembled compilation, mopping up pre-1720 movements which Handel did not use in the 1720 set, and adding one suite (no. 3 in D minor) probably dating from the early 1720s. (The G major suite, no. 8, may not be by Handel at all.) Furthermore, comparison with MS sources often reveals notable deficiencies in the 1733 texts. Yates gives good, straightforward performances, generous with aptly decorated repeats. The formal suites (nos. 3-6, HWV 436-9) are perhaps the most successful, whereas the opening B flat suite (HWV 434), with its variations on the theme later used by Brahms, and the G major/minor Chaconne (HWV 435) could have done with a touch more fantasy. The main disappointment is Yates' decision to follow the old received texts. She makes intelligent comments on the music in her notes, but shows no awareness of recent editorial research. Given that Terence Best published accurate texts of two versions of the Chaconne twenty years ago, and that there is also a good text in Peter Williams'

Wiener Urtext edition of 1994, it beggars belief that anyone should still play the 1733 text: it is clearly in error in putting a repeat of Variation 7 in place of the splendid variation in full chords announcing the return of the major mode after the central minor-key section. (Trevor Pinnock recorded a correct version in 1983, now on Archiv 447 290-2, but others who should know better – e.g. Bob van Asperen on Sony Classical SK 68260 – also follow the bad text.) Yates is also unaware that the G minor minuet 'ending' the B flat suite is in fact an isolated movement. (Chrysander, confused by the fact that the 1733 publication does not indicate any grouping of movements, erroneously added it to the suite.) Perhaps there is some kind of nostalgic case for committing to CD Chrysander's long-established version of the 1733 volume, errors and all; but please let this be the last time.

Anthony Hicks

Handel & Porpora "The Rivals" The Four Nations Ensemble (Andrew Appel *hpscd*, dir, Ryan Brown *vln*, Loretta O' Sullivan *vlc*) with Christine Brandes *S* & Geoffery Burgess *ob* 59' 17"

ASV Gaudeamus CD GAU 192

Handel 3 German arias HWV 205-7, cantata fragment *Languia di bocca lusinghiera* HWV 123; attr. Handel: violin sonata, HWV 307 (HG op. 1/12); Porpora cantata *D'amore il primo dardo*, Sonata in G for cello and violin; Porpora (arr. anon): aria fragment *Quanto affanno*

This programme would make an acceptable lunchtime concert, but is an odd mix for a CD. The theme is artificial: Handel and Porpora were indeed 'rival' operatic composers in London in the 1730s, but that aspect of their work is largely ignored. In his notes, Andrew Appel implies that the programme is intended to illustrate the contrast between the solidity of Handel's music and the 'facile' efforts of his Italian contemporaries, but the premise is doubtful and not well supported by the choice of music. Any grain of truth in his arguments is lost in the florid exaggerations of his prose, burdened with dubious claims (did Faustina really call Handel's music 'RUDE' [sic?]) and ludicrous metaphors (Porpora and Farinelli were called to London to cloud the waters of ticket sales and vocal styles). It is good to have the extant fragment of Handel's cantata *Languia di bocca lusinghiera* on CD for the first time, but it would have been even better if a text less corrupt than Chrysander's had been used, and if the spelling 'lusinghiera' had not been adopted throughout the printed material. Otherwise it is perverse to represent Handel in this context by three German arias, and a violin sonata which he certainly did not write. (The attribution of the sonata is not questioned here; it may be by an Italian.)

The Porpora items are interesting, but unhelpfully annotated. Only the cantata gets a clear source identification: it is the first of the set of twelve published by Porpora in London in 1735. The sonata, a sort of miniature cello concerto with

accompaniment for violin(s) and continuo, is taken from a manuscript in the New York Public Library, but is also said to have been 'published in London', no further details being given. It is in fact no. 3 of the six *Sonatas for Two Violoncellos and Two Violins* by Porpora and G. B. Costanza, issued by Walsh in 1745. (The sonatas are not individually attributed in the publication, so it would be interesting to know whether the MS source independently confirms Porpora rather than Costanza as the composer.) In respect of the violin-and-continuo arrangement of the aria *Quanto affanno*, Appel merely says that it was 'attributed to Porpora by... Walsh' but is 'actually a work of Hasse'. Less cryptically, it is the first item in a collection of aria arrangements which Walsh issued under the title *Farinelli's Celebrated Songs*, where it is attributed to Porpora. The aria itself, *Quanto affanno, o bella aurora*, is the very first song that Farinelli sang on the London stage: it began the pasticcio *Artaserse*, with which the Opera of the Nobility launched its second season in November 1734. Walsh published a selection of songs from the opera in full score, including *Quanto affanno*, giving only Hasse's name on the title page. The individual attributions on the arrangements are more reliable, however, and as the aria appears to have been composed for the London production, it is more likely to be Porpora's. It should be in da capo form, with a mid-section in contrasting key and tempo, but only the A section is played here. The booklet provides texts and translations, the latter competent, the former spoiled by numerous errors and bad layout. The poor scholarship and presentation are especially to be regretted because the performances are quite delectable. Appel's sober skill at the keyboard makes happy contrast with his verbal effusiveness, Christine Brandes is exemplary in her sensitive articulation of words within a secure and expressive musical line, Geoffery Burgess's sweet-toned oboe is most apt for the obbligato in that joyful Handel aria *Meine Seele hört im Sehen*, and the string players phrase and embellish with great taste. So enjoy this, but on no account read the sleeve notes.

Anthony Hicks

Krebs Orgelwerke Gerhard Weinberger (Trost organ of the Schlosskirche at Altenburg) 70' 29" (rec 1990) Christophorus CHR 4004 ££

I have already given the playing of Mr Weinberger a bit of a thumbs down for his two Bach CDs, but this 1990 recording shows him in a slightly better light. He uses Krebs's own stunning organ in the Altenburg castle chapel. It is rare to find such a close surviving link between organ and composer. Krebs was Bach's favourite pupil, and his music rarely does more than translate the Master's work into the more up to date Roccoco style. What Mr Krebs lacked was a good editor – with Reger-like consistency, his fugues break the bounds of reason. This CD avoids his worse

excesses and concentrates of his often attractive miniatures, although his Trio in B (track 15) is made to sound even sillier than it already is.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Locatelli Sonate a Flauto Traverso Solo e Basso, Opera II (parte prima: sonate da 1-6) Il Ruggiero (Daniele Tonini *fl*, Alessandro Palmeri *vlc*, Emanuela Marcante *hpscd*) Tactus TC 691202 55' 08"

Unfortunately the poor overall recording quality on this disc is almost enough to condemn it straight away. The sound is distant and unfocused with no clear definition between the instruments and consequently little sense of shape or musical purpose is conveyed to the listener. Added to this the flute intonation is a little wayward (possibly also the product of a sub-standard recording) which is rather a shame, as these works are seldom played or recorded. Following Leclair's example in France, Locatelli was amongst the first Italian composers to allow the flute to shine as a virtuoso instrument, incorporating all manner of new patterns and techniques into both *da chiesa* and *da camera* sonata forms. These are interesting works for any flautist, but sadly not done justice on this recording.

Marie Ritter

Lotti Requiem, Credo, Miserere Balthasar-Neumann-Chor & Ensemble, Thomas Hengelbrock 69' 34 DHM 05472 77507 2

Requiem in f, Miserere in d, Credo in F (including *Crucifixus* a8)

Like most listeners, I suspect, my experience of Lotti has been rather limited: I've heard several performances of various settings of the *Crucifixus*, sung some small-scale madrigals, and have also proofread one of his relatively few instrumental works, a trio sonata with oboe d'amore. This CD will, I hope, encourage other people to perform more of his sacred output, for it is absolutely stunning. The familiar eight-part *Crucifixus* is, perhaps, the heartrending highlight of the Credo setting (and the composer seems to have been exhausted by its intensity, since the ensuing 'Et resurrexit' struggles to get into its stride). The *Requiem* is full of beautiful music, taut Fuxian counterpoint standing side-by-side with Hasse-like arias (try the wonderful Track 18). Thomas Hengelbrock has assembled in the Balthasar-Neumann-Chor a group of soloists who truly can blend imperceptibly, only to emerge as individual voices as required. The instrumental playing is, likewise, of the finest.

BC

Montéclair A la guerre! Concertos for natural trumpet and harpsichord Gabriele Cassone *tpt*, Antonio Frigé *hpscd*, Ensemble Pian & Forte 79' 04"

Dynamic CDS 229

adapted from Concerts 3-6 of *Concerts pour la flute traversière* 1724/5

My initial reaction to this disc was unsympathetic. However, although I remain doubtful as to the suitability of the instrumentation to much of the music, I do now

enjoy the playing more, if still in small doses. The players' search for repertoire has taken them to these flute suites, of which No. 5, with programmatic movements such as *Melange des trompettes* and *La melle generale*, suits the forces particularly well. In these, further trumpets and drums are added along lines suggested by the composer. A number of the more introverted dances are played as harpsichord solos and others are shared between players in a way which I do not always find convincing. There are also a few strange-sounding chords. At its best, the trumpeting is technically impressive and the harpsichord playing neat; but I find it hard to suppress the thought that it shouldn't be happening. *David Hansell*

Platti 6 Sonate Op. IV [1746]. Iakovos Pappas *hp*scd 78' 18"
Agorá Musica AG 080

This is an interesting recording of works by Giovanni Platti, an Italian who spent much of his adult life working at the Würzburg court in Germany. The music is cosmopolitan in style, with more than a hint of early classical design – worth a listen, if rather lightweight. Iakovos Pappas is a worthy performer; he presents the music simply and cleanly, and there are some well-shaped sections in the slow movements. Elsewhere the swift succession of motivic ideas, often with rather stark, functional accompaniments, does not make for particularly easy listening, so this is a disc which will appeal more to the pre-classical enthusiast than to the general listener. *Robin Bigwood*

D. Scarlatti Complete Keyboard Sonatas Vol. 2
Michael Lewin *pf* 76' 16"
Naxos 8.553067

I'm puzzled. However effective individual Scarlatti sonatas are on a piano (I'm all in favour of pianists including a few in mixed recitals), I would have thought that those enthusiastic enough to want his complete works would expect a recording on the harpsichord – and not just any old harpsichord, but on instruments appropriate to the music (to the extent that it is possible to distinguish early Italian sonatas from the bulk written in Portugal and Spain). Naxos tells us that Lewin is playing a Steinway. His performances are fine in their way. But inevitably they tend towards a sort of prettiness because, as a stylish player, he does not use the resources of the piano to the full, while on the harpsichord the music would sound more full-blooded. The effect of a predominantly two-part texture is very different on the harpsichord than the piano, while slower, melodic sonatas like K.32 sound far too romantic. He does a good job, but I suspect that there is no point in recording Scarlatti on a piano unless you are going to go over the top and be pianistic in the worst possible taste: then the result could be amusing. *CB*

It is not made clear on the disc if the series is to include a variety of players and instruments.

Stanley Organ Voluntaries Richard Marlow
(Trinity College Chapel, Cambridge) 75' 40"
Chandos Chaconne CHAN 0639
op. 5/1, 5, 8, 9; op. 6/2,4,6; op. 7/6-9

I gave some background to the Trinity College organ and Richard Marlow's playing in the June *EMR*. This more recent recording has addressed some of the issues I raised. The winding is better controlled and the performance oddities are much reduced. But this is still not a performance that I could fully recommend to our readers. Stanley's skills as an organ composer are rarely enhanced by English performers, who seem to become transfixed by the pages of semiquavers and turn out type-writer-style articulation and lack of musical rhetoric. I am afraid that Richard Marlow is not untypical, although he does display a commendably improvisatory style in some of the movements, with added ornaments and flourishes. *Andrew Benson-Wilson*

Telemann Musique de Table (Tafelmusik)
Vol. 4 Orchestra of the Golden Age 73' 44"
Naxos 8.553732 £
Part III complete

Despite wanting to enjoy this series, I have not really been very kind to the first three volumes. The playing on vol. 4 is much better. The opening Suite sets the tone: the wind/string alterations are extremely well done. The concerto with horns is one of my favourites and I'm happy with this performance – the hunting calls of the finale are quite brilliant. As a whole, the set is a bit of a curate's egg, but, depending on your stance regarding Telemann, the same might be said of the publication itself! At bargain price, a worthwhile investment. *BC*

Vivaldi Trio Sonatas op. 1 Sonnerie 143' 00"
cpo 999 511-2 (2 CDs in box)
Op. 1 + RV43, 60, 70, 72, 83

As well as the 12 sonatas of op. 1, this set has two further trios, a sonata for violin and cello and a solo cello sonata. I was worried that perhaps Monica Huggett would outshine the rest of Sonnerie, but I was pleasantly impressed by the confidence of the other players. Gary Cooper, who is probably the best keyboardist around at the moment, is brilliant, while the other players, Emilia Benjamin and Alison McGillivray, are scarcely less so – if you haven't heard the latter playing solo, don't miss her performance of RV43. William Carter joins them – and gives the *Follia* a most Spanish introduction. At times the acoustic seemed just a little dry, lending a sharpness to the tone of the violins and a rather vicious bite to the harpsichord attack (and there's a strange extraneous noise at the very beginning of CD1) but none of that detracts from the supreme quality of this recording. Highly recommended. *BC*

Vivaldi Le Cantate II Elena Cecchi Fedi S,
Modo Antiquo, Federico Maria Sardelli
Tactus TC 672208 61' 49"
RV 656-660, 669

Vivaldi Le Cantate III Nicki Kennedy S,
Modo Antiquo, Federico Maria Sardelli

Tactus TC 672209 62' 13"
RV 653, 656, 662, 665, 667, 796

In stark contrast to a set I reviewed lately, this version is extremely stylish: the cello playing has direction without ever being heavy-handed, the keyboard and plucked continuo are sympathetic to the singer, while filling the ritornelli and links stylishly, and the links stylishly. The arias on Volume 2 are very well done: some of the coloratura has to be heard to be believed. The recitatives, on the other hand, tend to be slightly heavy-handed: Cecchi Fedi's 'interpretation' can have an adverse effect on pitch, with some rather snatched notes from the continuo section. Nicki Kennedy shows an amazing range (which she needs for the extraordinary leaps in the first movement of RV662), and she can characterise a recitative just as readily as she can articulate the coloratura and trills. Only one question – to the extent of his name being on the front and the back of the booklet and his photograph inside? *BC*

Zelenka Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis Anna Hlavenková, Magdalena Kožená, Lubomír Moravec, Richard Sporka, Stanislav Predota, Michal Pospíšil SAATTB, Musica Florea, Marek Styrncl *dir* 55' 41"
Studio Matous MK 0017-2-231 rec 1994
see p. 11

Baroque Recorder Concerti Scott Reiss rec, Hesperus 72' 28" (rec 1988)
Koch International Classics 3-7454-2 H1
Babell in D op. 3/3; J. C. Graupner in F; Naudot in C op. 17/2; Telemann in C; Vivaldi in C II *Gardellino* (op. 10/3), in D (RV444)

This re-release of a 1989 recording features a mix of concerto favourites (including Vivaldi's *Il Gardellino*) plus a handful of lesser-known works. Of these the concertos by Babell and Naudot are, as one might expect, cheerful and straight-forward, but the Graupner concerto is a little more difficult to follow, with some odd harmonic moments. Nevertheless, this is an attractively played recital: technically good and easy to listen to, with some moments of real flair. *Marie Ritter*

The Country House: Domestic music of the 18th century Marie Vassiliou, Alasdair Elliott, Harry Nicholl STT, Lesley Holliday fl, John Trusler *vl*n, Marilyn Sansom *vlc*, Jane Clark *hp*scd 70' 25"

Janiculum JAN D201
Music by Anfossi, Bononcini, Corelli, Galliard, Giardini, Handel, Haym, Noferi, Pasquali, Pizzoli, D. Scarlatti, & anon

The Grand Tour: Musical delights encountered by the 18th-century traveller in Paris, Rome, Naples & Venice (Performers as above) 64' 01"

Janiculum JAND202
Music by Blavet, Broschi, Castrucci, Clérambault, Corelli, Jommelli, Nardini, Pasquini, A. & D. Scarlatti, Terradeglias, Valentine & anon

These two discs consist of a pot-pourri of songs, contemporary arrangements of opera arias, dances and folk songs. Amidst these can be found some complete sonatas – a

Corelli violin sonata on each disc and a Robert Valentine flute sonata on D202. There are one or two interesting and unusual numbers, such as the Pietro Castrucci *Ciacona* for violin and continuo (D202, track 26), but these collections generally tap less well-known popular 18th-century repertoire. They are all competently and stylishly performed on period instruments but, with over 30 tracks on each disc and many items lasting under a minute, they are unlikely to be of real interest to the reader of *EMR*, though they do offer an introduction to the less familiar baroque composers and provide a useful insight into the music that appealed to contemporary audiences; they also and offer appropriate fare for souvenir-hunters at country-house shops. *Ian Graham-Jones*

A Musical Tour of Versailles 79' 20"
Virgin Classics 7243 5 61643 2 1 (rec 1992-95)

I imagine that this will sell best in the shops at Versailles. The notes are good as far as they go, but an opportunity is missed in linking the places where music took place more specifically to the pictures that occupy one side of the fold-out booklet, though there is a good view of the chapel. The recordings selected are too numerous to list, but are excellent and provide a varied conspectus of the repertoire, though the nearest it gets to solo keyboard music is Rameau's fourth set of *Pièces en concert*. The highlight for me is Couperin's motet *Tabescere me fecit* sung by Sandrine Piau and Caroline Pelon. *CB*

CLASSICAL

G. A. Benda, Gessel, Erlebach *Cantatas* Dorothee Miels, Britta Schwarz, Jörn Lindemann, Andreas Post, Klaus Mertens SATTB, Telemann-Kammerorchester Michaelstein, Ludger Rémy 74' 48"
cpo 999 650-2
Benda Bald wird ihn, Eilet, eilet das Gesetz; Gessel Sie sind nicht; Erlebach Gelobet sei der Herr

Four utterly forgotten cantatas written for some of the least important Sundays in the church calendar, and yet how beautifully crafted they all are, and in the hands of Ludger Rémy, how captivating they can be, with wonderful instrumental playing and excellent singing. Choruses are taken by the soloists, and how convincing an argument for the policy this CD makes! Star of the show, as with several recent releases from this line-up, is the soprano Dorothee Miels. Her 'Versäume nicht die Gnadenzeit' from the Gessel cantata is wonderfully smooth and seemingly effortless. Another highlight is the opening chorus of the first Benda cantata – small wonder that Mozart thought him the only German Kantor worthy of note. *BC*

Giordani Quartets & Quintets L'Astrée
Opus 111 OPS 30-233 67' 21"
Qtets op. 2/5 & 6; Qntets op. 1/3, 5, 6

At first I confused these galant chamber works with those of Felice Giardini, as

both composers worked in London and were roughly contemporary, but later I discovered that I had reviewed an Astrée disc of Giardini in 1997 (*EMR* 32) for a similar combination of instruments. There appears to be very little difference stylistically, although Giordani gives somewhat less interest to the independent harpsichord part in the Op. 1 set. Op. 2 are flute quartets. Pleasant, but shallow music, played stylishly, if at times somewhat tentatively, on period instruments.

Ian Graham-Jones

Gluck Alceste (Vienna Version 1767) Drottningholm Theatre production, Arnold Östman cond 146' 55" (3 CDs in box)
Naxos 8.660066-68 £

Having so enjoyed Minkowski's *Armide* last month, I'm afraid *Alceste* came as a bit of a disappointment. I suspect, quite simply, that the music just is not as good – in his attempts to make the music subservient to the text, Gluck has created lengthy periods of rather dry listening. How many times does Admeto have to say 'Non posso vivere senza da te?' and with such total lack of passion! The sentiment didn't match the heroic tenor voice either – he sounded more like he was off to beat up a bear in the forest than as if he were about to die of a broken heart. There are some quite impressive musical ideas (the trombones in the opening are a stroke of genius) and there are some nice moments in this performance, but the overall sound is not up to the L'oiseau-lyre Mozart sets and I cannot really recommend this to any but loyal Gluck fans. *BC*

Haydn The Paris Symphonies Orchestra of the 18th Century, Frans Brüggen 143' 26"
Philips 462 111-2 2 CDs

While Haydn was beaver away at Eszterháza, churning out music for princely (domestic and theatrical) consumption, his reputation in the rest of Europe grew in exponential proportion to his productivity. This was mainly due to the wide circulation of pirated editions of his chamber music, whose user-friendly (between *Liebhaver* and *Gelehrt*) middle-of-the-road style appealed to the burgeoning merchant and professional classes. His first overseas commission came in 1784 from the Freemasons in Paris, who wanted six *grandes symphonies*; this came as a timely challenge to divert his energies from lapsed operatic endeavours to some creative orchestral writing. The result is some of the most inventive and finely crafted music of the late 18th century. He had at his disposal the unusually well-endowed (about 70-strong) orchestra of the Concert de la Loge Olympique, manned only by Freemasons. About half the size, masonic connections unascertainable, the O18C renders the Paris symphonies with all the sophistication and sensitivity you would normally expect from this excellent band. The wind and brass are O18C's forte, but Brüggen does not quite get as sumptuous a string sound as he did from the OAE in the

Haydn *Sturm & Drang* symphonies I have reviewed previously. *Kah-Ming Ng*

Haydn Divertimenti vol. 4 Haydn Sinfonietta Wien, Manfred Huss 56' 43"
Koch Schwann 3-1382-2
Hob. II:1, II:G1, IV:5, X:10

The most interesting piece on this CD is the divertimento for violin, cello and horn, in which Haydn reveals himself as a shrewd 'orchestrator' by sometimes using the horn as the bass of the trio, to marvellous effect. The horn playing is extremely virtuosic, but even the brilliant Jozef Brazda cannot quite get around some of the most difficult passages. Indeed, like a Vivaldi recording I reviewed not so very long ago, I think this set suffers from having been recorded in a large room without any human filling: the resonance makes ensemble within small groups like this problematic. Still, there is plenty of fine music and it is played well, and within the spirit of the age. *BC*

Lombardini Sei Quartetti per Archi (Paris, 1769) Accademia della Magnifica Comunità Tactus TC 731201 61' 43"

More commonly known by her married name of Syrmen (listed in *New Grove* under Sirmen), the composer displays much more polish and her works have considerably more musical interest than the Giordani chamber works reviewed above and written at about the same time (1769). John Marsh, in his journals (see *EMR* Jan 1999) records hearing some of her performances of her own violin concertos, but does not mention these quartets. As a product of the Ospedali in Venice, her training as a skilled violinist is apparent in these works, dominated as they are by the leading violin. Mostly in two movements, they are spirited works, rhythmically driven, and receive excellent performances by this period quartet. No. 3 (officially in G minor) is tantalising in the way Syrmen explores the minor/major tonalities, while the four-movement No. 5 in F major starts with an intense short minor movement acting as an introduction to the following allegro. These are interesting works that stand up well against early Mozart – indeed, some phrases could well have been written by the master, and the recording can be thoroughly recommended. *Ian Graham-Jones*

Soler Sonatas for Harpsichord, Vol. 5 Gilbert Rowland 77' 26"
Naxos 8.554434 £
Sonatas 2, 5-6, 38, 58, 73-4, 95, 105, 114, 118

Gilbert Rowland's complete Soler on Naxos has been a welcome addition to the catalogue not least because it provides a cheap way to explore this often rather overlooked keyboard genius. Unfortunately, though, there is an element of 'almost but not quite' about the recordings – the performances are full of energy and are certainly big-hearted, but lack the finest degrees of panache, control and character-

sation. Vol. 5 starts promisingly with the extrovert Sonata no 73 in D major, but shortcomings are quickly apparent. There is a tendency towards rushing in some ornamented phrase endings, and many of the considerable technical difficulties are effectively left sounding unconquered. Less forgivable is the at times suspect four-foot tuning and the not always wonderfully well-chosen temperament. Dramatic pauses are compromised by ineffective damping. The heroic sonata in E flat, no 105, is more successful – much more communicative and with a clearer sense of purpose. Even here, though, there are moments of uncertainty and one or two suspect notes. If all this sounds like an assassination of Gilbert Rowland's efforts, it is not meant to be. I think the quality of musicianship here is basically very high and the recorded sound is good. The disc, in my opinion, has all the hallmarks of an otherwise promising recording project compromised by lack of time, underfunding or even mismanagement. Blemishes that should have been edited out are left unchecked, with unevenness an inevitable consequence. There is perhaps also a reflection of the difficulties involved in managing a large recording cycle, and the challenge of retaining the character of individual works as well as an overall vision and sense of unity. If this is a challenge not quite met then, despite my other misgivings, this is still a disc, and a series, which can be recommended. Not the best, but not bad for the price. *Robin Bigwood*

Vanhal Symphonies Vol. 1. Nicolaus Esterházy Sinfonia, Uwe Grodd 56' 04"
Naxos 8.554341 £
Symphonies A9, C3, C11, D17

Vol. 1 of this new Naxos series features only one symphony which I own already, the popular *Sinfonia Comista*. The English booklet notes are by 'Mr Vanhal', Prof. Paul Bryan (who has catalogued all the known symphonies) and the music is supplied by the New Zealand publisher, Artaria. The playing is crisp and light, which is what Vanhal needs – even in his *Sturm und Drang* guise, he is not really a serious composer, despite comments on his mental instability. Now and then I would have liked a little more spontaneity – there is plenty of scope for a cadenza both times through in the oboe solo central movement of D17, for example, but a simple linking scale is used; the pizzicato accompaniment is beautifully done! *BC*

19th CENTURY

Bishop Shakespeare at Covent Garden: Henry R. Bishop's Songs from Shakespeare 1816-21 Musicians of the Globe, Philip Pickett 67' 18"
Philips 456-506-2

This is a superb CD. Andrew Pinnock's notes are mildly apologetic on behalf of Bishop's chosen career path (a sort of early 19th-century dumbing down of musical culture), while at the same time suggesting

that there might just be a gem or two hidden away in his output. And how right he is! Philip Pickett, of course, is not going to waste his time recording second-rate material and, with performers such as the cast here, he makes a very convincing case for a re-assessment of the whole repertoire. Susan Gritton gets by far the lion's share of the arias, which are somewhat akin to early Rossini and (surprise, surprise!) Mendelssohn's Shakespeare settings, while there are also fine contributions from Julia Gooding and Mark Tucker. The playing is excellent – there's a wonderful cadenza on Track 1 between Susan Gritton and the solo flautist, and I particularly enjoyed the fortepiano rippling later on. Over and hour of charming music, beautifully performed. Yet another ideal Christmas present for people normally reject early music. *BC*

I listened to this a couple of times before leaving it for BC, and heartily concur. *CB*

Brahms The Sextets Hausmusik London Signum SIGCD013 75' 46"0

Hausmusik's recordings of the early Romantic repertoire are now well known. It is gratifying that they are now venturing into the later 19th century. As a schoolboy, I clearly remember asking for a violin E string in a music shop, and getting the response, 'Gut or metal, sir?' It is to be hoped that it will not be long before we regain that position in the string world; for the earthiness of gut strings is clearly evident, not least in the remarkable *andante* variations of the Bb sextet (surely inspired by the Bach D minor Chaconne, which he later arranged for piano) with its mouth-stopping and chaconne-like bass line, where the immense D minor sonorities contrast with the *pianissimo* of the almost vibrato-less flute-like D major section. The drive and precision of the ensemble are shown in the stunning finale's coda. Although I find the G major work the less satisfying of the two, it is immaculate in its detail and its purity of intonation. For those who like their Brahms free of cloying continuous vibrato and the often sharp notes of many modern string players, this is undoubtedly the recording to choose.

Ian Graham-Jones

Hummel Trios and Scottish Song Settings Pamela Dellal mS, Musicians of the Old Post Road 67' 18"
Meridian CDE 84404100
Piano trios op. 22 & 78; 9 song arrangements.

Nine songs from an 1829 publication, scored for flute, violin, fortepiano and cello, are superbly played by this period ensemble and tastefully sung (in the best 'received' English) by Pamela Dellal. Of the two piano trios, Op. 22 in F and Op. 78 in A, the earlier work is the more light-hearted; the *Rondo alla Turca* appearing to be a 'skit' on the 3rd movement of Mozart's K.331. The virtuoso Op. 78 (for flute, cello and fortepiano) is simply an introduction and a set of variations on a Russian folk song. Its maturity is evident

in the soaring melodies for the flute and cello in the introduction, as well as in the lyrical, yet virtuosic way Hummel handles the instruments in turn in these variations. The care that has gone into both recording quality and the performances on this disc is evident, and is fully recommended.

Ian Graham-Jones

Biedermeyer Sonatas: Richter, Wilms, Müller Francesca Pagnini fl, Paolo Bidoli pf 72' 41"
Dynamic S 2024
A. E. Müller *Grande Sonata in C, op. 38*; W. Richter *Duo concertante in a, op. 10*; J. W. Wilms *Sonata in D op. 33*

It is not clear from the outer cover of this disc that this is a modern instrument recording, but in fact the performance quality is excellent (other than occasional blips of intonation) and the pieces featured are all first recordings of virtually unknown works. The title 'Biedermeyer' Sonatas aptly sums up the salon style of these three pieces, which typically feature reams of sparkling passagework generated from relatively small quantities of inconsequential melodic material. Taken at face value this music can appear intolerably vacuous, but more recently the simplistic, bourgeois 'Biedermeyer' concept has gained acceptance as a historical movement reacting against the growing extravagance of 19th-century art. Whatever the case, this is an enjoyable combination of froth and elegant virtuosity. *Marie Ritter*

MISCELLANEOUS

Nou lat us sing: a Scottish Christmas Cappella Nova, Alan Tavener 63' 40"
Rota RTCD0001

This disc is based on an annual concert given by the group at Christmas; the repertoire ranges from anonymous early Scots settings of Latin and vernacular texts to special commissions for the project. Cappella Nova is one of Scotland's leading groups, and this CD will doubtless enhance their reputation. Its direct relevance for *EMR* readers is slightly dubious, given that most of the early material appears in arrangements. The singing is, generally, very good, although there is sometimes a clash in timbre between sopranos of the choirboy 'school of purity' and those who sensitively use vibrato. The record companies have clearly got their seasonal acts in order though, for this is yet another ideal stocking filler! *BC*

Organ Landscape: Silesia [13 organs played by] Heinz Bernhard Orlinski 78' 59"
Dabringhaus und Grimm MDG 319 0135-2
Music by Konrad Quenfort, T. Stolzer, J. C. Altnikol & later composers.

This tour around the little-known organs of Silesia might be of interest to the most dedicated organ buff, but is unlikely to have much impact beyond that small circle. The programme is largely of late 19th and early 20th century chorale arrangements and the organs are also

mostly of the same period. The two instruments within *EMR*'s remit are the 1695 organs at Schweidnitz and Grüssau, but they don't get much of an airing. The booklet lists specifications and registrations, but there is at least one specification that appears incorrect, so collectors of such things should be careful. The most interesting composer is a distant relative of Mendelssohn who taught Hindemith.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Orgelwerke Portugiesischer Meister Dorothy de Rooij (organ at Capela da Universidade Coimbra) 57' 27" (rec 1988) Christophorus CHR 4001 ££

This is a reissue of a 1988 DDD recording. Although the notes mention the composers and the organ specification, it would have been nice to have more about the essential qualities of the Portuguese, as opposed to the Spanish, organ and its music. For instruments as complex as those of Iberia, the registrations used for each piece would also have been helpful. The anonymous and bombastic *Batalha de 6º tom* is well worth a listen, but the playing otherwise sounds dated and there is little evidence of the wide range of ornaments that would be expected (but not indicated) in many of the pieces.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Spain in the New World: Renaissance, Baroque and Native American Music from New Spain Hesperus, dir Scott Reiss, Tina Chancey 60' 58" Koch 3-7451 2

Don't let your heart sink when you listen to the first track of this CD: a not-quite-in-tune, predominantly high-pitched recorder ensemble tackling some rather simply dance music; it's only when a singer joins in that the whole thing really takes off. From there on, things are much more enjoyable. It is interesting to hear how the soprano voice contrasts with low recorders and continuo. The repertoire ranges from Spanish music before the conquest of the Americas to native Indian music, and 'Western' music as written by the indigenous composers under Spanish influence – including a fine aria by Rafael Antonio Castellanos from 18th-century Guatemala. Together with various recordings on the K617 label, this CD seems to represent a growth area in early music performance, and marks a growing overlap with ethnomusicology. BC

HMV CLASSICS

5 73464 2 *English Madrigals* The King's Singers 73' 33"

5 73477 2 *Music for St Mark's, Venice* Taverner Consort, Andrew Parrott

5 73458 2 *Handel Concertos* Toulouse Chamber Orch, Georges Armand & Louis Auria-combe cond 69' 48"

EMI are flooding the market with reissues in this series; another 40 titles appeared in July, of which these three seemed of relevance to *EMR*. [I should also have asked EMI for a copy of the Hilliard's *Intrositus*]. I'm not, though, sure if that applies to the Handel, unexciting modern-

instrument recordings of unspecified date previously issued on CD in 1994. It contains op. 6/1 & 6, op. 4/6 on harp (played by Lily Laskine), op. 7/5 (Lionel Rogg) and the oboe concerto in G minor (Pierre Pierlot). Has EMI nothing better than these available? The King's Singers' disc has 35 madrigals, giving an average duration of a fraction of two minutes each. Apart from the emphasis on the shorter examples, it is a good selection, compiled in 1987 from recordings of 1974, 1976 and 1982. Information is exiguous: it would be nice to know who the singers were at each date. Readers will know the style: immensely capable, but with the voices sometimes lacking body – perhaps the result of too much singing to microphone.

The best of the group is the Taverner St Mark's programme, though the connection of Vivaldi's *Clarae stellae* with the basilica is doubtful. It is not mentioned in the booklet, which has very short notes described as 'from a note © Clifford Bartlett 1991'; most of the editions are credited to me, but I don't remember hearing the CD before. This is certainly worth acquiring if you don't have the original, containing impressive performances of G. Gabrieli *In ecclesiis*, *Magnificat a14* and *Canzon VIII a8* (these are not from 1991 Taverner Gabrieli issue), Monteverdi *Adoremus to Christe* and *Christe adoramus te*, Lotti *Crucifixus a6* and *a10*, Vivaldi *Clarae stellae* (RV625), Castello *Sonata II* (1629) played by John Holloway, solo motets sung by Emily Van Evera and Jeffrey Thomas, Legrenzi's *La Bevilacqua* and a couple of organ pieces from John Toll. Very good value. CB



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LETTERS

Dear Clifford

May I try out on you and your readers some thoughts that have been evolving in my mind over the years? These have become more concrete in recent months, during the time that I have been working in my neighbourhood here in Poitiers to create a choir out of some 30 interested people, average age 50, most of whom have never sung in a choir, not in parts anyway, in their lives. This in a culture where for men to sing – in a mixed choir anyway – is generally seen by them as sissy (a paradox indeed!) and where, if there is any theoretical musical training at all, it is not for application. As it seems to me, when performing is being taught, only beauty of tone is sought, and at the expense of musicianship.

My observations – I am at last prompted to put them on paper by the phrase ‘each of the four vocal timbres’ in Roger Bowers’ contribution to *EMR* 53 – are not based on research, since I am not a musicologist, but on nearly 50 years’ choral singing (I started very young in my state primary school and in church choirs) in groups ranging from 200 to 12 (not forgetting one-to-a voice consorts), of standards semi-professional to abysmal, with conductors of international renown and none, and of music mediæval to contemporary.

What has been troubling me is this. The laws of statistics – distribution curves, standard deviations and all that (again, I am no expert) say that a random group of an average population of whatever it may be will cluster round a central norm, and that a given percentage will vary by only so much from that centre. Why then do we always think of singers as falling into broadly four categories: soprano, alto, tenor, bass? Is the human voice the exception to the statistical rule? From my observation, this just does not reflect the reality. The vast majority of us are middle-voiced – mezzos and baritones. It is only, as it seems to me, because of the needs of music as written that some tend (are pushed) to move to one or other of the categories deemed appropriate to the male or female voice, with or without professional guidance, and to accept the label, ‘I am a soprano’ rather than ‘I sing soprano’. It seems to me that accidents of musical history alone have led to this artificial characterisation, and one can see how it came about (during the ‘early music’ period). But the phenomenon is very frustrating when one is working with a whole lot of 50-year-old beginners! Their voices just do not fit the music! And at a more personal level, it is galling to be told, at each change of singing teacher, that the previous teacher trained you into the wrong voice (in the same way as dentists always find something wrong the first time you go to them), that one is a soprano, an alto or a mezzo when in fact one also rather enjoys singing tenor.

Which brings me to my other point, if I may while I am in full spate. Could it not be argued that in fact not only are we nearly all middle-voiced, but that the natural voice of us all is chest voice? (I refer of course only to adults, the tessitura of boys’ voices being, as I see it, one of the main historical reasons for the four-voice categorisation.) The range women sing in is of course somewhat higher, but mostly overlapping that of men (I should love to have been a fly in the park when you were discussing the matter with Jennie Cassidy). The head voice, likewise available to the entire population of singers, is the artificial voice for all, and similarly to a large extent, the ranges of men and women overlap in it. I should be absolutely fascinated to know the views of musicologists and practitioners alike on this subject – and perhaps there are feminist issues around too?

Incidentally, any frustration I may experience at the lack of musical background in my choir is more than compensated for by the tremendous warmth, great enthusiasm and willingness to learn (all of those things being typical characteristics of the French, I find). The results of course are not spectacular, but all – singers and conductor – have a great deal of fun learning respectively to sing in a choir and to lead one, and the mutual appreciation is palpable. And I find myself amazed at my patience! Venetia Caine

May I too ask for comments on this eminently sensible approach. Perhaps the fairly limited ranges that Roger Bowers demonstrates for English mediæval and early-renaissance polyphony were not so much determined by the ranges of the voices as by compositional theory, (or even by the limitation of a five-line stave, though the counter to that is to wonder why the stave settled down to five lines.) Until boys were required, most men could have sung at least two of the three ranges. Since Venetia mentioned Jennie, I will pass on a comment from Peter Holman made while we were rehearsing Monteverdi's Vespers (for review see p. 17) that she benefitted from never having been told by a vocal expert what type of voice she should be cultivating, so consequently managed to sing what she liked (which in that performance included some tenor-range chant sections in the Magnificat as well as the solo in the Sonata). CB

Dear Clifford,

Dafne may be a Caldara first in South America, but in Europe we were treated to a fine staging of *I disingannati* in Innsbruck in 1993. Staged by Philippe Lenaël and designed by Thierry Bosquet, the singers included Isabelle Poulénard, Isolde Siebert, Dorothea Röschmann, Scot Weir, Ralf Popken, Kai Wessel, Dominique Visse, Werner Van Mechelen and Huub Claessens. Sigiswald Kuijken conducted and La Petite Bande played. It was truly wonderful. Michèle Kohler

Ian Graham-Jones also draws attention to an amateur performance of Adriano in Siria in an English translation in Chichester in, he thinks, 1985. CB

Dear Clifford,

It is most unwise to question the wisdom of a reviewer unless he is clearly an utter nincompoop, which is certainly not the case here (AB-W September 1999, p. 14). After all, he was kind enough to say of The York Waits' YEMF concert that: 'Their playing was distinctive, approachable, probably realistic, and certainly great fun'. I appreciate the humour behind his remark: 'I think The York Waits would consider it an insult if I were to call their playing sophisticated', presuming that by 'sophisticated' he meant, as in my dictionary, 'very refined and subtle'. Fair comment, well, of the shawm band anyway. However, I do wonder what he meant when describing our procedure before each set. Having observed that we blow our instruments briefly before playing: '...they have what in most circles would be thought of as a tune-up...' he states ambiguously: 'Rarely does any tuning result. But what matter'. Now, nervously hoping that the answer will not be what I'd rather not hear, my question is: does he mean that we then proceeded to play out of tune or that tuning appeared to have been unnecessary because we played in tune anyway? Our instruments are set up to be 'in tune', and then we make minute adjustment to pitch during performance. After the concert, we cautiously agreed among ourselves that it had gone rather well. We are usually almost self-destructively self-critical after a concert, but our happy opinion this time was supported by numerous favourable comments from the audience as they left the Guildhall, as well as by the reviewer on our local paper who gave us the write-up of

our dreams. So, perhaps poor tuning was not the issue, but tuning certainly does matter! 'They used an astonishing array of instruments...' because an audience needs variety, a rest from constant assault by shawms. The only complaint I have heard about the excellent concert by Les Haultz et Les Bas (not me, I can't get enough good shawm music!) was that there was too much LOUD. Changing efficiently from instrument to instrument is risky, although possible with practice and sympathetic programming, but it is still essential to check that reed and instrument will respond when blown and to get your lips and brain re-adjusted before launching into the next set. Shawm to flute or sackbut to cornett are particularly tricky. I (we?) admit that, on that occasion, we may have been a little undisciplined in our musical foreplay, and must pull our socks up in future.

James Merryweather

Dear Clifford

I thought you might be amused by the use to which *EMR* has been put. David is doing English Language A level and was required to find an example of a specialist journal with language and terminology relevant to that specialism. He looked through an issue and chose one of your reviews!

We always enjoy your editorials.

Elizabeth Dodd

I hope our specialist terminology was understood! Our younger child has now progressed to the local college (a promoted Tech), where his timetable includes 'litteracy'!

CB



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G. Bononcini – Ombra mai fù

Il Xerse, Act I Scene 1Villaggio Delizioso. *Xerse sotto un Plantano*

Ad[agio]

Xerse (C1)

Om-bra mai fù Di ve-ge - ta - bi-le Ca-ra, et a -

10

p

[*p*]

- ma - bi-le So - a - ve più, ca-ra, et a - ma - bi-le So - a - ve più, ca-ra, et a - ma - bi-le

19

f

f

So - a - ve più.

4
2

Bar 19: Vn1 - 2nd note D