

Harpsichord & fortepiano

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FESTIVAL REVIEWS

Report on the Melbourne International Organ & Harpsichord Festival

1997 marked the 27th year of the Melbourne International Festival of Organ & Harpsichord, and it was particularly apparent that the focus has shifted from the keyboard emphasis of previous years. Now we have a true wide-ranging early music festival. There were 29 events spread over Easter week, but here please forgive me if I mainly concentrate on those concerts with some harpsichord content.

MIFOH opened on Easter Sunday in St. Mary Star-of-the-Sea Church, West Melbourne, with a programme titled 'Baroque Concertos'. Geoffrey Lancaster directed the Tasmanian Symphony Chamber Players from the 1983 Dulcken copy by Bill Bright owned by Melbourne University Music Department. The TSCP play modern instruments, but with quite a pleasant quirky approach: much of the time you could be forgiven for thinking they were using original instruments. (Their recording of the *Four Seasons* on the ABC Classics label was an Australian bestseller, and well worth looking out for—it ranks quite favourably with the best of the other 26 or so versions currently in the catalogue.) Their opening programme contained works by Avison, Purcell, Muffat, and Geminiani, with a highlight being a suite from Purcell's *Dido*. But we had to wait until the end of the afternoon for the group to be joined by overseas guest Peter Planavsky (St. Stephen's, Vienna) on a small chamber organ for a Haydn *Organ Concerto*. And if you show the manic Geoffrey Lancaster to a keyboard to conduct, he seemingly can't decide whether to stand or sit, and you must please be content to have the harpsichord enter after the others have grandly been given their cues. Instead of a river cruise or other social events of past festivals, Easter

Monday afternoon was time for 'Early Music Promenade', with four concerts on the hour in different venues around Melbourne University. Sydney's Ensemble of the Golden Age opened the afternoon in the Trinity College Chapel at 1pm. The harpsichordist was Peter Hagen, a young (well, my age) Melbourne player recently returned from several years' study in Holland. It is always a pleasure to hear different harpsichords in Melbourne: he used his Klinkhamer German single loosely based after Zell, although with angled tail instead of double bentside. At 2pm was the Elphin Recorder Consort and 3pm was a most interesting mediaeval programme titled 'Cyclus' by Tre Fontana. A viol consort was the 4pm event, benefitting from the participation of three international visitors to the annual Viol School held in a different Australian city each Easter, and coincidentally in Melbourne this year. The whole afternoon was popular beyond expectations, and the organisers had some trouble getting the crowd of 160 from event to event and promptly seated. It might have been a little easier if the programmes were shorter, but of course each group wanted to pack as much into their hour time slot as possible.

The 5pm twilight concert on Monday was also conveniently in the popular Trinity College Chapel at the University. Titled "Bach and the Art of Transcription", Geoffrey Burgess (baroque oboe) presented the programme with Ann Murphy masterfully playing her own 1976 Bill Bright after Dulcken. Geoffrey had adapted several movements from the Bach *Beloved Capriccio* to substitute oboe for the top part, and this was a most interesting approach, and very effective for those horn-like motifs. Their performance was very musical and most polished, and the too-often heard oboe squawks were absent. The twilight concert on Tuesday saw a Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven programme with Geoffrey Lancaster the soloist on the

Melbourne University Gröber Fortepiano from Innsbruck, c.1815 (FF-f'', ivory naturals, five knee pummels controlling una corda, moderator, harp, bassoon, dampers...). This instrument came many years ago via Jorg Demus, and has been played sporadically since arriving in Melbourne. The label on the soundboard warns 'Restoration in Progress': since I last tuned this instrument two years ago for Bart van Oort's all-Beethoven recital, the original tuning pins have been replaced but the ease of tuning has not improved. The tolerance of fit to the plugged and redrilled wrestplank is not good, and it didn't help to have the same strings reused with their dangerously loose-wound hitchpin loops. Jennifer Bates was the soprano soloist who flew in from Sydney at very late notice to replace the advertised vocal artist, and most professionally sang the same programme. Geoffrey did the too-common *Pathétique* as nobody had ever heard before. He is a player who tends to polarize the audience to feelings of love or hate, but like or dislike his vivid interpretations, few can question his intensity of dynamic control, or command of the keyboard.

All harpsichordists know full well the difficulty of instrument choice. It's a luxury to have more than one instrument at home, and if you wish to use two at a concert, it's probably three times the hassle, even at a Festival like this one. Wednesday night saw Patricia Ahern (baroque violin, graduate assistant to Stanley Ritchie at Indiana) present a lovely programme ranging from early Italian stuff to Handel and Bach, with Linda Kent on harpsichord. We now had the opportunity to hear another instrument: the 1989 Marc Nobel Ruckers/Hemsch copy. This fine harpsichord deserves to be more heard around town, and perhaps it will now with the rapid growth of the Early Music Studio at Melbourne Uni. The Italian half of the programme would have benefitted greatly from a more appropriate choice of keyboard—the Ruckers/Hemsch tone set up a

sort of contest between players which enabled good dialogue for the Bach and Handel, but was a little disturbing for the earlier pieces. Linda is a most skilled continuo player, and made the best of it with good use of expression, but a different pre-interval instrument would have made her job much easier and the concert even more enjoyable.

Time for 'Voice & Viol' at Thursday twilight, again in Trinity College Chapel. Rosalind Halton accompanied on the Bright/Dulcken, with cantatas by Handel and Montclair, four Marais pieces, and the J.S. Bach Gamba & Harpsichord Sonata in D. While pleasant, this performance lacked the zing of most of the other festival week contributions. The harpsichord had just returned from restrung and revoicing prior to the Festival, but the evening was marred by a sadly slipping bottom D string. A quick bite to eat, then it was off to an all-Mozart 'Classical Clarinet' programme, a Festival first with a particularly sublime K581 Quintet. Not a crowd-pleaser, though, to judge by the poor attendance in the Assembly Hall on Collins Street on Thursday night. Before the era of the modern concert hall complexes, this was a very popular chamber music venue for Melbourne.

Friday twilight was 'Flute & Harpsichord', with Hans-Dieter Michatz and Linda Kent, quite appropriately on the Nobel Ruckers/Hemsch. This was a beautifully played programme with good cohesion and every note by Bach, Telemann, Müthel and Benda absolutely dripping with affect.

You will excuse me if I skipped the famous Choir of Gloucester Cathedral on Friday night so I could watch my nephew win at basketball, but Saturday afternoon was certainly worth waiting for. I was able to delay my departure from Melbourne long enough to catch the first half of The Musicke Roome (Lucinda Moon, baroque violin; Keran Bruce, gamba; Urban Westerlund, harpsichord) performing the complete Rameau *Pièces de Clavecin en Concert*. Melba Hall was remodelled a few years back, and they sensibly discarded the rickety scaffolding seats. Now with a slightly raked floor, most of the audience tends to have to sit below

stage level—to get some greater height, you must sit under the balcony. Urban wisely chose the Marc Nobel Ruckers/Hemsch, and it was obvious the group had been playing very comfortably together for a long time. They had several other performances during their Australian tour, and even recorded the Rameau before leaving Melbourne. Do you think bass instruments sometimes tend to be seated in the bentside curve simply to fill up the stage space without tonal consideration? I would have liked to have heard some of this concert with the violinist seated there instead of the gambist: the music was needlessly bottom heavy because of the reflection from the harpsichord lid.

What did we miss this year? Less than a quarter of the performances used harpsichord. There were no harpsichord solo programmes—in fact, only one or two harpsichord solos were sprinkled in other events. Melbourne is delightful in early autumn. The trams trundle along wide streets, and the deciduous trees which just don't make it in the warmer climate of Sydney are just about turning colour. If you have never been, the muddy Yarra River meanders through the town, and I had space in my van this year to bring my bike down, so each morning I skipped the 10am Seminar Series and cycled along the trails for 15km upstream instead. They practice their rowing on the Yarra daily, a most British pursuit aptly transplanted to this most British city

of Australia. It's also Comedy Festival time for the whole month, and while this lengthy laughfest tends to monopolise the press somewhat, at least everyone walks around smiling.

Do join us next year: The world is much smaller than it used to be, and there is some lovely music made here.

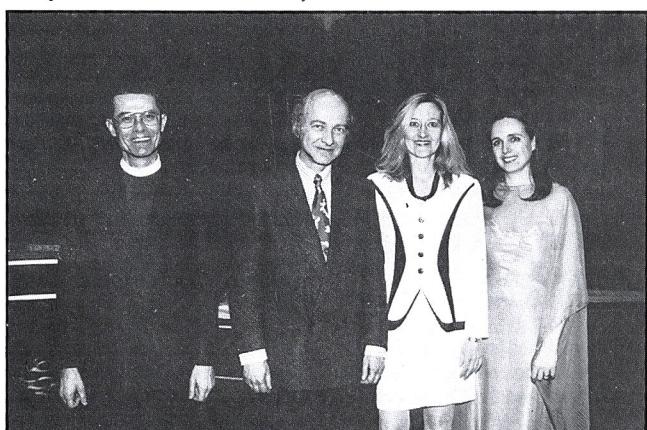
CAREY BEEBE

Carey Beebe is a well-known Australian harpsichord maker.

Montreal's Bach International Harpsichord Festival

For its tenth anniversary, Montreal-based Baroque Music Society *Les idées heureuses* was the host of a Bach International Harpsichord Festival from May 1st to May 4th, 1997. During these four days, Montreal was the scene of an unprecedented harpsichord event held at Centre Pierre-Péladeau. The centre's main concert hall, La Salle Pierre-Mercure, offered an ideal acoustical environment for harpsichord recitals.

Eight young internationally-renowned harpsichordists were invited to perform: the opening recital was given by the festival's artistic director, Geneviève Soly, joined at the end by members of her family to perform a movement of the Vivaldi-Bach four harpsichord concerto: her mother Mireille



Bach Festival judges: Dom André Laberge, Réjean Poirier, Charlotte Mattax and Geneviève Soly (Chair)

Lagacé, her twin sister Isolde Lagacé and her niece Mélisande McNabney; Christophe Rousset (France) was to give the first evening concert but had to decline the invitation at the last minute because of hand injuries. Skip Sempé (USA) stepped in instead; other concerts featured Peter Sykes (USA), Pierre Hantaï (France), Kim Heindel (USA) at the lute-harpsichord, Rinaldo Alessandrini (Italy), Luc Beauséjour (Canada), Pieter Dirksen (Netherlands), while Dom André Laberge and Mireille Lagacé (both from Canada) shared the last evening concert. A midnight special organ recital was also given by Bernard Lagacé at Christ Church Cathedral and a student concert featured 13 young harpsichordists. Harpsichords by Keith Hill, Yves Beaupré, Réjean Poirier, D. Jacques Way & Marc Ducornet, and Willard Martin were used throughout the festival. All concerts were accompanied by lively commentary from artistic director Geneviève Soly, a trademark of *Les idées heureuses*.

The festival also included a series of public lectures on various aspects of Bach's music given by musicologists Dujka Smoje (Université de Montréal, Canada), Guy Marchand (Université de Montréal, Canada), Gregory Butler

(University of British Columbia, Canada), David Schulenberg (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA), and Pieter Dirksen (Netherlands). An art exhibition was mounted in the concert hall lobby, featuring works by Canadian artist Louise Prescott, while a movie premiere of *Le Ruisseau* by Étienne Robert de Massy, an account of the search for traces, sources and documented places which were part of Bach's music and life, was presented at Cinémathèque Québécoise (just across the street). An exhibit room was open to visitors for the duration of the festival, presenting harpsichords, books, CDs, music scores and archival videos of *Les idées heureuses*.

Last but not least, the festival included an international harpsichord competition, open to harpsichordists born after May 2nd, 1967. Sixteen candidates from Canada, the USA, Japan, Korea, and Finland sent their tape for the preliminary round last November. A jury formed of Luc Beauséjour, Catherine Perrin and Geneviève Soly retained 10 candidates for the semi-final round, from which 4 were chosen for the final round. The jury for the semi-final and final rounds consisted of Dom André Laberge (Saint-Benoit-du-Lac,

Quebec), Charlotte Mattax (Rutgers University, NY), Réjean Poirier (Université de Montréal, Canada), Peter Sykes (Longy School of Music, Boston) — who stepped in to replace Christophe Rousset — and Geneviève Soly, president of the jury. Prizes were awarded as follows: Nadia Bohachewsky-Soree, 29, from the US, received First Prize; Pascale Oigny, 26, from Montreal, was awarded Second Prize; Olivier Fortin, 23, from Quebec City, obtained Third Prize: a mention was accorded to the fourth candidate, Gilbert Martinez, 29, from the US. Having been part of the jury, I should mention that the whole competition was of the highest standard and may well have been, judging from the turnout, the highlight of the festival.

Overall, the festival was well attended by harpsichord lovers from the whole continent and even from abroad. Montrealers can now look forward to more such events in the future: *Les idées heureuses* are planning to hold a harpsichord competition every two years and, if financial support permits, a festival every four years.

RÉJEAN POIRIER

This review was written for Westfield: Newsletter of the Westfield Center, and is reprinted with permission.

CONCERT REVIEWS

Lucy Carolan

Adrian Boult Hall, Birmingham Conservatoire, 5th June 1997

This concert more than served its purpose of showing off a new instrument by Michael Johnson and an accomplished player — Lucy Carolan. The instrument, a Taskin-Goermanns copy made for Birmingham Conservatoire, was made possible by generous financial support from the Radcliff Trust. It is one of a few fine copies to have come out of his workshop over the last couple of years and is a good rival to any similar copy by other

makers. Johnson seems to have developed this model to near perfection, bringing out the best qualities of the original.

Carolan opened this inaugural concert with a selection of the d'Anglebert transcriptions of Lully's theatre music. This included a sparkling *Les Sourdines d'Armide* (1686) and the *Chaconne de Phaeton* (1683) which showed off the delicate top register and upper manual. The first half was finished with the *8.me ordre* of François Couperin. Carolan's playing here was full of poise and elegance despite the lack of sincerity in some of the movements. The Sarabande and final Chaconne were both austere

and grand and left the audience "in an emotional turmoil" during the interval.

The second half was, by contrast, devoted to German music and as a result showed off the prevailing Goermanns trait of the instrument. After a seldom heard prelude by Böhm, which was as noble as it was just plain flashy, Carolan let the last word go to J.S. Bach in the form of the fifth Partita. The opening prelude was played with a wit that clearly showed that Bach was in 'humour' mode. This character was carried throughout the whole suite letting up only at the doleful Sarabande. Carolan's forte was a clear understanding of the music



Taskin-Goermanns copy by Michael Johnson 1996 at the Birmingham Conservatoire

she performed, and communicating this to the audience who received her well.

All in all a fine performance on another quality instrument from the Johnson workshop.

MARTIN PERKINS

Olga Tverskaya, fortepiano

Purcell Room, London
16th March 1997

Olga Tverskaya's Purcell Room recital offered generally warm interpretations of all the pieces played, indeed perhaps too warm for the Haydn Sonata in C (Hob XVI: 50) and the Mozart Adagio in b (KV 540) which formed the bulk of the first half of her programme. In these pieces the instrument (a copy by David Winston of an 1823 Brodmann) did not help. In my view the music of this repertoire moves the listener almost in spite of, rather than because of, the performer. Within its well-set boundaries it is the small inflections, the details, that give the music its soul — details that can be smothered by too powerful an ego. Fortunately in this case, just when you thought things were getting a bit too steamy à la Mills and Boon, Ms Tverskaya's impish sense of humour provided a welcome lowering of the temperature.

The first half ended with Vorisek's Impromptus Op.7. I was not familiar with these modest salon pieces which nevertheless have an individual flavouring, brought out very successfully in this performance. They were able to stand up to comparison with the well-known Schubert Impromptus Op.90 that opened the second half. The final piece in the programme, the Schubert Sonata in A, D664, was given such an impressive interpretation — full of romance and song — that I expected any encore to be a let down. How wrong I was! When Ms Tverskaya played Glinka's *La Séparation* I felt that the performer was at one with the composer. Olga Tverskaya is a remarkable musical personality who was deservedly well-appreciated by the audience.

Trio Eroica

Snape Maltings, Aldeburgh
31st March 1997

Prizewinners in two categories at the 1996 Flanders Festival, Trio Eroica (Gili Rino, clarinet; Frank Wakelkamp, cello; J. Marc Reichow, fortepiano) gave an all-Beethoven concert as the final event of the 1997 Aldeburgh Early Music Festival. This was an impressive recital with precise, accurate playing allied with well thought-out interpretations. I

did not think that the cellist's use of portamento worked in the Trios (Op.11 and Op.38), especially when the cello's themes were later picked up by the clarinet. Overall, however, there was a real sense of ensemble between the performers, although a more intimate environment would have showed the music off to even better effect. A little humour, too, would have been welcome in the Scherzo of Op.38; indeed I did feel that perhaps the performers were in general too cautious with the music, although it is better to err on this side than on the side of self-indulgence. A group well worth following and an excellent end to an interesting early music festival.

The Music Collection

The Harley Gallery, Welbeck,
22nd March 1997
The Harley Gallery, Welbeck,
3rd July 1997

The Music Collection began their residency at the Harley Gallery in March with a first-rate concert of music for violin, cello and fortepiano. The group's director, pianist Susan Alexander-Max, was joined by violinist Catherine Martin and cellist Alison Gillivray. The fourth star of the evening was Derek Adlam's sparkling copy of a 1795 Walter fortepiano.

Mozart's Violin Sonata K305 was performed with considerable dash, pianist's fingerwork and violinist's bowing articulation marvelously together. However, the final result did not convince. For my taste, Catherine Martin's vibrato was too heavy and too frequently lavished on high notes to suit this repertory, especially as it competed with the crystalline qualities of the Walter fortepiano. In this music it is essential that the violin part understands its fundamentally supportive role.

The cellist, Alison McGillivray, employed vibrato in a much more subtle manner in her performance of the Beethoven Cello Sonata Op.5 No.2: using it, I believe correctly, as an expressive ornament rather than as standard technique. The music was given a bold and impressive

interpretation: the rapport between her and the pianist was excellent. McGillivray's performance in the Beethoven Trio Op.1 No.3 unmasked new levels in my understanding of the music. Alexander-Max showed that clarity and accuracy of fingerwork can pack as much emotional punch as extremes of dynamics, and this certainly made up for patches of weak intonation in the string parts. The Music Collection's second concert at the Harley Gallery in July was given to a much larger audience, some of whom had no doubt been enticed along to listen to John Suchet as guest speaker. I don't think Mr. Suchet added much to the concert: anecdotes are all very well in an after-dinner speech, or over a pint of beer at the pub, but in a concert any spoken words, unless very carefully chosen, become superfluous. It may have been interesting for the audience to discover, for example, that the Kreutzer Sonata may have been written for John Bridgetower; but as the piece wasn't going to be played, I couldn't see the point in mentioning it. In fact the verbal links with the music that was played were somewhat tenuous, recalling those found in magazine news programmes. To accommodate the larger numbers attending, the piano was placed at the end of the gallery, so that the audience did not surround the performers as they had at the previous concert. This limited the audience's visual communication with the musicians, and in chamber music that is always a mistake. The two pieces performed (Beethoven Trio Op.1 No.1; Schubert Trio D898) were given excellent performances, the pianist Alexander-Max making a majestic impression on an Adlam copy of a Nanette Streicher of 1814. I couldn't help thinking that Haydn may have been right in being a bit squiffy about Op.1 No.1, but the Schubert more than compensated for any short-comings in the first half. The commitment and intelligence which The Music Collection demonstrates in its performances of Classical chamber music certainly makes them a group well worth watching.

PH

MUSIC REVIEWS

J.S. Bach: *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Parts I & II*

ed. Richard Jones. The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (Publishing) Limited.

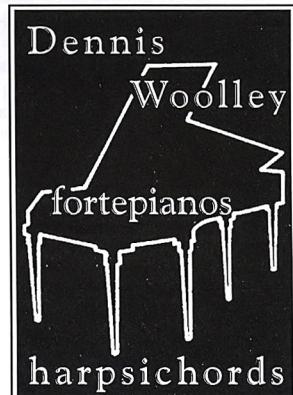
'The Well-Tempered Clavier is the Old Testament, the sonatas of Beethoven the New [Testament of Music']'. Hans von Bulow's well-known (and probably too often repeated) aphorism remains as valid today, however, as it has always done; especially aimed at and written "For the Use and Profit of the Musical Youth Desirous of Learning as well as for the Pastime of those Already Skilled in this Study", to quote J.S. Bach's title-page, these celebrated and extraordinary Preludes and Fugues have been the cornerstone of both keyboard as well as contrapuntal techniques from the time of Bach himself and his sons through until relatively recent times. With the gradual discovery of techniques and attitudes appropriate to period performance, however, this wonderful 'dictionary' of fugal writing is in very real danger of becoming the sole preserve of harpsichordists and clavichordists. Indeed, on various occasions such distinguished pianist/scholars as Charles Rosen and Alfred Brendel have lamented the fact that very few pianists, especially students, actually bother to play the "48" on their instrument. Thus, the inestimable inheritance and gift of well-defined part-playing on the piano is gradually dwindling.

With the relatively recent issuing of the new ABRSM edition, however, this should encourage keyboard players of every ilk and persuasion that they would profit enormously from getting down to study at least a handful of these Preludes and Fugues. The result of much devoted labour by its editor Richard Jones, this whole vast enterprise has been most impressively produced. A new edition of an established masterwork raises certain questions, not least from the prospective purchasers themselves: is it readily available in both hard and soft cover

versions? Is it affordable? Is it well laid out with practical page-turns? Is this new edition sufficiently scholarly, including up-to-date research; and probably last (but not least), is the editor of a sound reputation in this particular musical area?

I can report a resounding "yes" to all the above questions. Richard Jones' previous five editions of J.S. Bach for the ABRSM have been of a consistently very high standard and he has delivered the goods again with these two volumes of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.

Included in both volumes are very thorough editorial notes that detail such matters as alternative readings, notes on performance and, more importantly, an extensive Introduction that deals clearly and lucidly with such issues as the evolution of the text and the specific manuscript sources for each of the Preludes and Fugues. Indeed, this is an authoritative Urtext edition, based as it is on all the extant 18th-



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century manuscript sources; specifically, the surviving autograph fair copy in Berlin, Deutsche Staatsbibliothek Mus.ms.Bach P415 (source A) used for Part I and the "London Autograph" that is intrinsic to Part II. As a bonus, Tovey's commentaries from his earlier (1924) edition are reprinted and make for worthwhile reading.

Both volumes are printed clearly and boldly on good quality paper with enough space between both the treble and bass staves, as well as the stave-systems themselves, to enable students and/or their teachers to write in comments and fingering. One small, but visually obvious mistake: in Part I, the titles of Fuga 13 and Praeludium 14 have been italicised and therefore do not typographically conform to the rest of the publication.

Whatever your chosen instrument, this is not only a fine editorial achievement, but also a compendium of both wisdom and pleasure virtually without equal. Mozart and Chopin, amongst many composers, breathed its heady air. If we are sufficiently humble, then perhaps we, too, may be intoxicated afresh by the numerous beauties and profundities that lie within *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.

RICHARD LEIGH HARRIS

J.S. Bach: Klavierbüchlein for Anna Magdalena Bach, 1725. Bärenreiter BA 5164.
Italian Concerto, BWV 971. Bärenreiter BA 5194.

In 1725, 'old' Bach was forty; he had been married to Anna Magdalena for four years and they were expecting his tenth child, Christian Gottlieb. This was also the year in which Bach assembled for his wife a second 'notebook' which contained early versions of the keyboard Partitas III & VI, the first two French Suites and, more importantly for students and their teachers, several examples of the genre known as 'galanterie': charming but musically uncomplicated menuets, polonaises and marches in binary form. All of these were intended as teaching material for use by the Bach household, from the oldest down to the youngest.

This fascinating document contains

amongst its many treasures different versions of a Polonaise in g minor by the then eleven-year-old C.P.E. Bach, examples of figured-bass as applicable to recitative and aria (Anna Magdalena was a singer), the inclusion of François Couperin's *Les Bergères* (sixth Ordre), as well as a truncated version of the C major Prelude from Part I of the "48" (bars 16-20 missing, but printed in smaller type). Bach (or more probably his wife) included the tiny but very intense and highly-ornamented *manualiter chorale* *Wer nur den lieben Gott...* BWV 691, presumably for purposes of developing an expressive style of playing on the clavichord.

Many players will discover, to their surprise, that two very popular Menuets (nos.4 & 5) were not written by J.S. Bach but by Christian Petzold. Notice, too, the Menuet (p.44) that could be an early version of the Menuet in the fifth Partita.

Georg von Dadelsen has once again edited this *Klavierbüchlein* with his usual clarity and skill. I do wish, however, as must many performers of this marvellous album, that he had included in his otherwise informative Preface, much more concerning the manuscript sources. It is frustrating to have to consult a separate critical commentary (NBA Vol V/4).

Bach's Italian Concerto, written specifically for a harpsichord with two manuals, forms one half of the second part of the *Clavierübung* — the other being the French Ouverture in b minor (originally c minor).

First published at the Leipzig Easter fair in 1735, this publication proved so popular that it was reprinted the following year. Even Bach's sternest critic, J.A. Scheibe, commented of the Concerto in 1739: "...this clavier concerto is to be regarded as a perfect model of a well designed concerto". Behind this finely-conceived-and-executed solo work lies, of course, the highly formalised archetype of the Vivaldian concerto. In Bach's hands, though, the grave beauty of the aria-like Andante, for example, effortlessly surpassed its model.

The present volume edited by Christoph Wolff offers the text of the Neue Bach-Ausgabe (V/2) originally edited by Walter Emery. This revised publication results from a systematic collation of all the available sources

and is, therefore, a truly authoritative edition. Once again, the critical commentary is published separately. Bärenreiter's presentation is clear, clean and spacious and can be thoroughly recommended, except for a seemingly small (but in the context of this work, significant) detail: the designation of "f" and "p" would have been much clearer had these markings been indicated by italics. This may prove irritating to many players.

RICHARD LEIGH HARRIS

J.P. Krieger. Passagaglia (ed. M. Machella). AMM 63

J.H. Rolle. Sinfonia XIX (ed. L. Cerutti). AMM 58
Edizioni Musicali Euganea, Armelin Musica, Padova, Italy.

Krieger's *Passagaglia*, consisting of 45 variations on some related harmonic progressions, is one of only three of the composer's keyboard works known to survive. The work, written before the composer took up his post as organist at the Halle court in 1677, is typical of the Italian, rather than French style, that influenced German variation writing at this time. The variations acquire a sense of momentum by alternately building up to several climaxes through the use of shorter note values and a busier texture, and by relaxing the pace in the surrounding passages. A tiny error in the printed music occurs in b.120 where the LH Cb should read C#.

Rolle's *Sinfonia XIX* is a most genial piece in the galant style. As its name suggests it employs a fast-slow-fast three-movement form. I presume one is meant to repeat the second-half of the *Poco Presto* before playing the little five-bar coda. Both these editions present the music clearly, but more information on the sources used (none at all is given about the Rolle) would be welcome.

PH

A Collection of Swedish Harpsichord Sonatas from the 18th Century: J.J. Agrell; F. Kelleri; F. Uttini; H. Ph. Johnsen; J.H. Roman. Collected by Eva Nordenfelt-Åberg. AM 018

Autographus Musicus, Baudhagen, Sweden.

This review takes a look at a sample of the work of the enterprising Swedish company, Autoraphus Musicus. The edition in hand is an anthology of facsimiles of a selection of keyboard sonatas found in Swedish libraries by either native Swedish composers (Agrell and Roman) or composers who worked at some point in Sweden (Kelleri, Uttini, Johnsen). The pieces have been well-chosen, and although, in my opinion, the two sonatas included by Agrell are the best in the anthology, all the pieces have their own merit and interest. Together they provide an introduction to 18th century Swedish keyboard music as well as a cross-section of approaches to the sonata in the same period.

Considering this last point, we find that there are no real surprises: four out of the six sonatas have the standard four-movement form (although interestingly no two pieces order fast and slow movements in exactly the same way); one is in the Venetian fast-slow-fast idiom, and Roman's remarkable piece is really a four-movement sonata with another three movements tacked onto the end. Indeed such suite elements can be found in all the sonatas, and in most of them the key remains the same for all the movements (apart from the trio in minuets).

Movements on the whole are bipartite, but Roman's is again an exception with the first three movements being through-composed. Uttini also employs non-binary structures such as variation form, fugue and a rondeau (ABA). Of the composers represented, Roman (1694–1758) and his probable pupil Agrell (1701–1765) were native Swedes, although the latter spent most of his career in Kassel and Nürnberg. Roman was in charge of the Swedish Royal Chapel and the other three composers, Kelleri, Uttini and Johnsen, all gained employment in connection with the Swedish royal court — although Uttini arrived in Sweden as part of a visiting opera troupe. The burgeoning middle-class market for music led to the production of keyboard works such as the ones here: mainly agreeable and not too taxing for the

performer, although Roman's sonata has a pleasing quirkiness. All the facsimiles apart from the last (Uttini) are clear, and most ambiguities can be easily sorted out. There are few problems of reading: Johnsen uses the C3 clef for a couple of bars and the Kelleri the G3. All are taken from prints found, although not necessarily originating in Sweden — except the Roman, which is given in a clear manuscript version now in the library of the Royal Academy of Music, Stockholm. Some indication of the size of the original sources would have been useful, and it is a pity that some gentle sub-editing did not clear up some of the errors in the generally informative preface. In sum, then, it is an interesting collection that can be recommended to all those with an interest in the music of this period.

PH

W.F. Bach. 12 Polonaises for Piano
(ed. Bolesław Woytowicz).
Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne
(PWM Edition).

These twelve polonaises by W.F. Bach have an important rôle to play in the history of their genre: extending late Baroque models, such as his father's example in the sixth French suite, and emasculating practically all the vestiges of the original folk dance-song rhythmic characteristics with delightful filigree melodic ornamentation. Each piece is written in a different key, both major and minor on C, D, Eb, E, F and G. They were written around 1765 — after the composer had walked out of his post as organist at the Liebfrauenkirche in Halle, but before he left that city for Brunswick in 1770.

There are a number of problems with this Polish edition, originally published in 1968, but reprinted to mark the 50th Anniversary of the PWM Edition (1995). The most serious problem is that the two sources on which the edition is based — the composer's autograph, and a copy of the manuscript by Forkel — are never distinguished from one another by the editor. Forkel added tempo indications, crescendo and diminuendo markings, some supplementary

ornaments and some changes in pitch, supposedly recalling lessons which Wilhelm Friedemann gave him at Göttingen. The editor's 'Afterword' optimistically states that "consequently in the present edition everything concerning the text comes, either directly or through the authorized mediation of Forkel, from W.F. Bach. And so it is rather an Urtext edition than a critical source publication." An Urtext cannot, by its very nature, be based on two sources; choosing the Forkel version could well be the sensible choice, but the way in which it differs from the composer's autograph is essential, not superfluous, information, especially when in matters of pitch the composer's manuscript is preferred over Forkel's.

This fundamental error leads to the assumption that Forkel's dynamic markings are evidence that these works were conceived for the piano. In fact they work perfectly well on the harpsichord as the composer's manuscript dynamics (only *f* and *p*) indicate. (Indeed Forkel's dynamics are really student notes on performance practice and not at all essential to the structure of the piece.) From this erroneous assumption the editor then assumes that articulation "must have presented considerable difficulty to the musicians of those times, since they were accustomed to being quite unable to play legato on the harpsichord..."[!] and this results in a battery of editorial slurs.

Realisation of ornaments is given in small staves above the main one — a clumsy feature. Suggestions of how embellishments could have been tackled at the time are best left for introductory remarks. Editorial fingerings are also added; and, as the music type is quite small and the text includes slurs, ornament realisations and Forkel's continuous crescendi and diminuendi, the result is as cluttered as any over-edited non-Urtext edition. A glance at the page of the beautiful autograph supplied in the book gives a totally different impression (and also shows the *Polonaises* were numbered differently in this source): it is this that should have been an inspiration to the editor.

PH

DISC REVIEWS

Romanesca: Italian Music for Harpsichord

Sophie Yates
Chaconne, Chandos CHAN 0601

This is a good 'sampler' CD giving an overview of music of the late 16th to 17th centuries. There is a wide variety of music, from dance pieces by Giovanni de Maque and Giovanni Picchi to toccatas by Girolamo Frescobaldi and Michelangelo Rossi. The main works on this disc are taken from Frescobaldi's 1615 collection; the *Partite 14 sopra l'Aria della Romanesca* has some wonderfully lyrical moments if a bit lacking in variety. Also on this disk is the *Cento Partite, sopra Passacagli* which serves well here as the ultimate work with Yates' command of the keyboard making a climactic and orchestral finale. A spontaneous 9th Toccata (wrongly called *Toccata in a minor* on the sleeve) makes up the works by Frescobaldi. The dance movements by Giovanni Picchi are far more exciting here than in previous recordings I have heard, and sound believably danceable rather than just listenable. The *Todescha, Ballo ditto il Pichi* and *Ballo Ongaro* are almost shocking in places on a first hearing as Yates manages to convey a sense of grandeur and freshness to these old and small-scale pieces. The Antonio Valente *Tenore del passo e mezo con sei mutanze* has a real sense of mounting tension through variations. The jewel of this CD is the little-heard *Canzon francese del Principe* by Carlo Gesualdo. This is Gesualdo in typical mad, murdering prince mode with some wild embellishments here and there which Yates exaggerates to a great effect. The instrument chosen for the recording, a copy of various Italian originals c.1600 by Ransom and Hammett 1994, is occasionally plagued by a slipping of the tuning. On the whole, compared to her earlier releases, this collection is somewhat disappointing — not as spirited and definitely not as sensual. However, it is a lively performance of quality music by a gifted player and worth owning for the varied repertoire.

MARTIN PERKINS

The Lady's Banquet

Volume 1: *Aires from the Opera Curiously Set* and Volume II: *Lessons for the Mistress*
Jane Chapman (harpsichord).
Collins Classics 14562 and 14572

The title *The Lady's Banquet* is taken from the publications of John Walsh, from 1704 onwards, "being a Choice Collection of the newest and most airy lessons for the Harpsichord or Spinnet, together with several Opera Aires, Minuets and Marches Compos'd by Mr. Handel, performed at Court, the Theatres, and Publick Entertainments: Being a most delightfull Collection, and proper for the Improvement of the Hand on the Harpsichord or Spinnet."

Arrangements by William Babell of the latest operatic 'hits' of the early 1700s make up the content of the first CD and volume I starts and finishes with these most skilful arrangements from Handel's operas (amounting to 40 out of the 75 minutes of this disc) with particular emphasis upon the popular *Rinaldo*. They are from a French publication, *Pièces de Clavecin de Mr Handel, tirées par Lui-même de ces meilleurs Opera; et ajustées avec des variations* and the mostly shorter arrangements of Mancini, Bononcini, Conti & Alessandro Scarlatti from volumes 3 & 4 of *The Lady's Banquet* make up the middle.

The well-chosen harpsichord Jane Chapman uses for this first volume is a single manual Kirckman of 1766 enabling quick register changes which she does with taste and sense throughout. It also retains its original device of a pedal enabling the registers to be engaged progressively and thus making an orchestral crescendo and decrescendo possible, which she does to great effect about eight minutes into the first track.

Babell's Handel arrangements are virtuoso pieces and, as such, one may understand Hawkins' statement that few could play them but the composer himself. In his notes to accompany the CD, Richard Langham Smith states that this music is of considerable interest to the modern-day music lover, which indeed it is; even if your taste is not for the more grandiose

Handelian style, with its trumpet fanfares and insistent rhythms, Babell's translation into a valid harpsichord language is very edifying despite some rather unyielding left-hand octaves and extended arpeggiated cadenzas which only work where the chords are warmed by over-holding. The beautifully decorated *Lascia ch'io pianga* and singing *Questo Conforto Solo* show what the harpsichord is capable of in expressive hands and the tirades loved by both singers and accompanists to fill in empty spaces are truly exciting in this performance, with some brilliant scale playing. The notes then suggest that the Handel arrangements provide insight into the place of the woman keyboard player in 18th century English society. I do not quite follow the reasoning in viewing this as a gender issue; they would be too difficult to be suitable pedagogic material for the less skilled of either sex and I fail to see why only the female of the species would wish to reproduce the music heard at the opera, or to discover the latest arias for herself in the comfort of her own home, although she might be more likely to have the time required for the necessary practice. One can imagine some of these pieces being presented to visiting teachers or musicians however, to be played for the ladies' entertainment; then it would make a banquet, indeed, although working on the premise that enough is as good as a feast, I might suggest that this is not a CD to consume at one sitting! A Thomas Hancock spinet of 1732 is used for volume II and, as a common domestic instrument, this is again a good marriage for the majority of the pieces, although we might like to intersperse it with an imported Italian harpsichord which would have benefited the Italian toccatas. Whilst the choice of pieces was made primarily to "delight the ear", this volume gives us a clearer picture of amateur music-making in the home than the first volume and I might have chosen this CD as volume I and the *Aires from the Opera* as volume II. All 46 of the pieces are extracted from the collections of Walsh between 1704 and 1735 and they provide a varied repertoire of pieces or *Lessons* from which the *Mistress* might very well improve her keyboard skills, including plenty of 'feminine' phrase endings,

some of which I would have liked more merrily in this recording. There are many anonymous pieces which are mostly popular songs or dances of the period; miniatures, of which the tiniest is track 40, the Scottish sounding *Soldier Laddy* — at all of 28 seconds! Purcell and the influence of the French suite is present, as are the fashionable Italians represented by some commanding toccatas, and Jane Chapman nicely rounds off the set by returning to a lively *Capriccio, Prelude e Allegro* and *Fantasia* by Handel for the finish. Thus we are served an internationally varied diet, played with, dare I say, a happy 'mastery' by Jane Chapman in these two complementary CDs.

PENELOPE CAVE

**Alessandro Poglietti:
Rossignolo**

Joyce Lindorff, harpsichord
Titanic—233

Rossignolo is the name of a manuscript collection given to the Empress Eleanora of Austria in 1677 on the occasion of her marriage to Leopold I. It consists of 36 sections, many of which introduce nightingale chirrupings. The music is well written and pleasant, only really remarkable for its nightingale conceit. Both the liner notes (which claim that the music anticipates "the notion of a European community") and the quotation from New Grove on the sleeve ("...one of the most important cycles in the literature of keyboard music") are, to a large extent, hype. The style of the music remains stubbornly Italian, despite movement titles such as *Französische Baiselements* and *Pollnischer Sablschertz*. The use of birdsong is also rather conventional: Poglietti is no Messiaen, and we wouldn't expect him to be.

Fortunately, despite these claims, Lindorff's playing is rather restrained; in fact, a little more *capriccioso* would have added some welcome relief. I cannot believe that the collection was meant to be played as a cycle; the suite which forms the first 11 movements I could just about tolerate, but the set of 20 rather conventional variations is much too long. Surely a selection should have been made. Number 13, *Alter Weiber Conduct*, is the most distinctive; supposedly, according to the CD notes, a satire: "the insincere

wails of these paid mourners are depicted in chromatic motion of an audacity not heard again until Richard Wagner". This is not only nonsense, but I, for one, cannot find any sense of satire here — either in the music or in the interpretation. Poglietti is no Biber, and I find listening to the whole disc in one sitting a rather dull experience.

PH

J.S. Bach:

Flute Sonatas

Stephen Preston (flute), Trevor Pinnock (harpsichord), Jordi Savall (viola da gamba)
CRD 33145 (2 CD set)

Violin Sonatas

Elizabeth Blumenstock (violin), John Butt (harpsichord)
Harmonia Mundi HMA 1907084.85
(2 CD set)

There is a current mania for recording the complete works or genres of a particular composer, an offshoot of our encyclopedia culture. With the *Well-tempered Clavier* or the Brandenburg Concertos this makes some sense, but less so when the works chosen do not necessarily share origin or intention, but are only circumscribed by genre, for example the flute or violin sonatas of Bach. Performers of early sacred music have found a way out of this mind-set by placing mass or vespers settings within a liturgical context; they allow the polyphonic music to be highlighted by the surrounding plainsong, at the same time giving the contemporary listener sufficient variety to maintain interest. This is in contrast to most instrumental recordings. Is one really supposed to listen to all of Bach's flute or violin settings in one sitting? If not, what is the purpose of these discs? To be used as works of reference? Or are listeners to construct their own programmes by selecting tracks from different discs? One approach that might be constructively explored would be to emulate the musical entertainment provided for courts, academies or domestic circles where anthologising (so disdained in our own period of collected editions) was of the essence. Record companies need to use more imagination.

"J.S. Bach: The Flute Sonatas" proclaims the title of the new CRD disc, and this neatly illustrates another problem arising from the encyclopedic

approach. Two of the sonatas included (BWV 1030 and 1033) are probably not by Bach, and the last third on his sonata BWV 1032 is missing and replaced on this recording with the completion which Dürr provided for Bärenreiter. Omitted are the trio sonatas which employ flute, although the *Solo pour la flûte traversière* — here called *Partita* — is included. The presentation is mundane.

The three sonatas for flute and harpsichord (all in three movements) are on one disc, and the three sonatas for flute and continuo, followed by the a minor partita (all in four movements), on the other. The CD notes by Nicholas Anderson compare BWV 1031 to sonatas by Quantz — how fascinating it would have been for some of these works to have been recorded alongside Bach.

The recordings themselves, originally released in 1975, are excellent, as one would expect of Preston and Pinnock, joined by Savall in the continuo sonatas. Any 'mannerist' tendencies in the performance never overwhelm the natural flow of the music. Every phrase is expressively shaped, with a more flexible approach to line than we usually hear nowadays, resulting in beautiful and often moving interpretations. The recording is somewhat resonant but this too adds warmth. A classic.

The Harmonia Mundi J.S. Bach: **Violin Sonatas** provides the six sonatas with obbligato harpsichord (BWV 1014–1019), along with the only two sonatas for violin and continuo where there are no doubts about attribution (BWV 1021 and 1023). Any attempt at providing contrast by including some of the solo sonatas or trio sonatas has been abandoned, although there is some compensation in being able to hear BWV 1019 in both its second and third versions. In the liner notes, John Butt makes a case for the sonatas BWV 1014–1019 to be regarded as a collection, but the recording falls short in convincing the listener that these works should be heard in succession. The first disc contains BWV 1014–1017, the second BWV 1018–1019 followed by the continuo sonatas BWV 1021 with cello and BWV 1023 with viol. This is all rather unimaginative.

The performances by Blumenstock and Butt, also a re-release, this time from 1993, like that of Preston and Pinnock manage to make very difficult

writing seem very natural. I must admit, however, that I failed to warm to these performances, finding the conception of the music somewhat mechanical with little give-and-take between the players and a uniformity of approach that makes the music seem, at times, a little dull. Occasionally the balance seems to be wrong, especially when the violin's *pianissimo* start to long notes is swallowed by the harpsichord and when the lower compass of the violin comes across less well than the higher notes. Some tempi seem a little extreme, either too slow (the andante of BWV 1014, for example) or hurried (the allegro of BWV 1016), and movements can appear to end abruptly.

Long trills tend to be of variable length—not necessarily a fault, but the results here are often unsatisfactory.

PH

Johann Sebastian Bach: The Young Virtuoso

Richard Egarr, harpsichord
Globe GLO5150

Bach's early keyboard works are played here by the no longer up-and-coming Richard Egarr. Two suites (F BWV 833 and A BWV 832) are interspersed with and complemented by the Toccata D major BWV 912 and e minor BWV 914, the Fantasia and Fugue, a minor BWV 922, and Prelude and Fugue in a minor BWV 894, finishing with the Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue, d minor BWV 903. Egarr really brings out the vigour and spirit of these smaller works. The toccata BWV 912 is particularly full of exaggerated rhetorical gestures that leave the listener thinking there is more and more to be heard. The Fantasia and Fugue a minor BWV 922 is particularly daring with a 'Habanera-like' fugue that drags the music kicking and screaming through extreme keys that is effective in the chosen temperament and on a fine instrument (Ruckers 1638 copy by Joël Katzman 1991). The F major suite is less varied in style and articulation but more pathetic and affected in nature. The Präludium in particular is played as though meandering through the music in child-like simplicity. Together with the A major suite, which also has some fragile moments it reveals a more graceful and delicate

side of Bach and Egarr. Egarr's strength is the variation in attack and articulation which keeps the music sounding fresh, young and exciting. Purists be enlightened!

MARTIN PERKINS

François Couperin: Music for Harpsichord, Vol. I.

Laurence Cummings.
Naxos 8.550961

Over half of this CD is devoted to Couperin's mighty *Première Ordre*, whilst the last half-hour or so is given over to the *Concerts Royaux* nos. 1 & 2. This is an impressive issue in many senses: the recorded sound of the Taskin copy (Michael Johnson, 1983) is full and resonant, yet not overpowering; the playing is invariably idiomatic, stylish and rhythmically secure—the tempi are always steady and flowing. Cummings is an adept and alert harpsichordist who succeeds very well in capturing the rhythmic nuances and subtleties of this particularly individual idiom, although he could have relished and lingered a little longer over some of the extremely rich harmonic progressions and, perhaps, adopted a slightly more relaxed and flexible approach in his deployment of *inégale*.

Generally, the typical profusion of ornaments is smoothly and convincingly incorporated into the melodic lines, although some of the left-hand *tremblements* in *Les Silvains* (track 8) are apt to be bumpy. The following track, *Les Abeilles*, seems to have excluded the 'tendrement' quality.

For Cummings' finest playing, listen to *Les Sentimens* (track 11) and *L'Enchanteresse* (track 16), both of which are beautifully judged and sensual into the bargain.

Naxos has proved once again that a budget label can give really good value for money, both artistically and financially. I look forward to the next release in this Couperin series.

RICHARD LEIGH HARRIS

Domenico Scarlatti: Thirteen Selected Sonatas

Pamela Nash, Harpsichord.
Aladdin ALDN 033 (music cassette)

The thirteen Scarlatti sonatas on this cassette are Kirkpatrick numbers 441,

442, 380, 46, 28, 27, 84, 125, 9, 140, 214, 208 and 209. Six of them were among those included in Volume 1 of Ralph Kirkpatrick's two-volume edition of *Sixty Sonatas* (Schirmer), which appeared in 1953 along with the book about the composer.

The first two sonatas on this cassette form a pair of sonatas in B flat major. The quality of the first one (441) may not be sufficiently strong melodically to sustain its persistent repetitive rhythms, but the second one of the pair (442) is a jolly and whimsical movement in 3/8 time with a delightful dance-like air about it. The E major sonata (380) is also one of a pair, and, unfortunately, its companion movement (381) has not been included here. The sonata played is a well-known established favourite *Andante* movement. Two further sonatas in E major follow (46 and 28). The first of these is a lively movement that Scarlatti marked *Presto*, but the tempo here may be a bit too slow, and the music is spoilt a little by some rhythmic unsteadiness. The other E major sonata is in 3/8 time, and has some capricious and humorous rhythms and some wide melodic leaps and unexpected twists and turns. The movement has a pleasant mixture of scales and arpeggios in its materials, and its spirit and mood are well captured here. This sonata, and the one that follows here (27), were both included by Scarlatti in his 30 *Essercizi* in 1738. The b minor sonata is another well-known favourite, and it is one that exhibits some very smooth melodic patterns and cross-hand activity.

The next two sonatas are in C (84) and G (125). Both are fast and energetic, and the latter is probably better known than the former. These pieces are contrasted here with what is probably Scarlatti's best known keyboard solo—the graceful d minor sonata that was also published in the *Essercizi* (9). Here the speed chosen is gentle and pleasant, and the performance very neat.

The D major sonata (140) is rather dull and undistinguished in melodic terms, but the movement has some subtle changes of key and a great variety of materials. The 'gigue' sonata in D (214) that follows is very attractive, and is given an exciting and vigorous performance here.

The last two sonatas form another pair, in A major (208 and 209). The

first is a slow movement marked *Andante e cantabile*, and has a melody that would suit a woodwind instrument. Its sighing phrases recall various typical slow movements for flute by Quantz. Its companion piece (209) is in 3/8 time, and is a scherzo-like *Allegro* that has a good deal of melodic charm.

The sonatas chosen here reveal a very pleasant range of keys and textures, and exhibit some of the diversity of Scarlatti's skills as a composer and player. His keyboard music also exploited a great range of tempi, but this range is less evident on this cassette, where most of the chosen sonatas are moderately quick or quicker in speed.

Pamela Nash faithfully plays the repeats of the sections of the movements as Scarlatti intended, but without any variations or additional ornaments to the music. The playing is neatly fingered and rhythmically clear.

The harpsichord used is by Milan Misina (after a Taskin model of 1769). It is tuned in unequal temperament on the principles of Valotti. The sound is very pleasant.

GWILYM BEECHEY

Soler: Sonatas for Harpsichord (Complete) Vol.2

Gilbert Rowland. Naxos 8.553463.

The Art of the Harpsichord: various artists

Arion Arn 60358

Gilbert Rowland is a harpsichordist who has played the sonatas of both Scarlatti and Soler for many years. Consequently, his interpretations are weighty and authoritative.

On this second volume of *Soler sonatas*, however, he is let down by the choice of instrument. The 1976 'French style' two-manual harpsichord by David Rubio (presumably after Taskin?) is a big, rich sound ideal for the French repertoire, but it is too resonant to cope with the inherent rhythmic incisiveness that is required of Soler's particular keyboard idiom.

Nonetheless, the sheer exuberance of invention shines through very strongly. In general, the playing appears to acquire fervour and personality as it progresses, Rowland's

finest performance being reserved for the final four-movement Sonata No.92 in D (1779) [track 11]. This is a particularly joyous and affirmatory work and Rowland captures these qualities to full effect.

The majority of the sonatas on this recording are paired by key à la Scarlatti. There is an obvious logic in applying this practice in consecutive Sonatas such as nos. 16 & 17 in E flat, but I do question the wisdom of this procedure in Sonatas whose material is a) contrasted and b) thematically unrelated.

If you are unfamiliar with Soler's music, then the freshness of this latter Sonata [track 4] would be a good place to start: glittering passagework in thirds, inventive sequences and modulations; vivacious, yet noble as well.

Despite my earlier reservations, this is a disc that contains some extraordinary (almost eccentric) music which is still not sufficiently known beyond a relatively small circle of aficionados. Buy it and spread the word.

Distributed in this country by Discovery Records, Arion's *The Art of the Harpsichord* is something of a sad reissue from 1978. I assume that the original idea was to show the harpsichord in many guises from solo, to duo and in concerto form, but the end product sounds merely thin musically and bitty in the selection. Composers represented include J.C. and W.F. Bach, Daquin and Rameau, Dandrieu, Leclair, Vivaldi and Handel. Why, then, is J.S. Bach omitted?

Using four frankly very variable harpsichordists, the playing is old-fashioned, unstylish and woefully undistinguished. Incessant manual-hopping and registration changes abound. This selection is emphatically not representative of the noble art of the harpsichord, nor of its illustrious practitioners. Definitely not recommended — a totally hideous issue from any standpoint, I'm afraid.

RICHARD LEIGH HARRIS

Frauenmusik für Cembalo

Sally Fortino K.e.n.wald Nr.1

Sally Fortino's CD of 'Women Composers for the Harpsichord' concentrates entirely upon those of the latter half of the 18th century; it

therefore goes without saying that this is music in the *galant* style, and it should be said at the start that it is no more 'drawing-room music' to be scorned than that being written by their male contemporaries. The Boucher painting for the cover, depicting *La Marquise de Pompadour*, perhaps belies the professionalism of the composers portrayed by this recording. The pieces are all played with a lively elegance on an attractive-sounding harpsichord after Goujon, 1749, by Thomas F Steiner, upon which Sally Fortino manages to project a suitable singing line and dynamic contrasts, but I missed the skill of producing a sighing diminuendo for *appoggiaturas* and especially at feminine cadences.

Not only are we presented with the chance to listen to and compare these seven composers from such different musical centres as London, Paris, Venice and Vienna, but we are provided with excellent biographical notes on each composer. We meet Elizabeth Weichsell at eight years old, later to be painted by Joshua Reynolds; pupils of J.C. Bach, Haydn, Salieri and Porpora; Marianna von Auenbrugg, known to the Mozart family; and others admired by Diderot and Charles Burney, as well as the short-lived Mme de Villeblanche whose c minor *allegro* and *andante* are the least carefree of the collection. Fortino has edited the fine keyboard sonata by Marianna Marrines for *Furore Verlag* (Kassel, Germany) and it is to be hoped that she will be enabled in her intention to produce further editions of 18th century keyboard and chamber music by women composers. Although I have always enjoyed the late 18th century English harpsichordists, I had expected to find 73 minutes of possibly trivial galant keyboard music more than I would wish to listen to at one sitting; but I thoroughly enjoyed it and found that I became increasingly attuned to its stylistic grace and sensitive to the nuances of its constrained palate, and I do recommend this recording for its immense charm.

PENELOPE CAVE

The Virtuoso Harpsichord

Jacqueline Ogeil
Move digital MD 3167

This is an Australian CD of some of

the better-known harpsichord repertoire, but finishing with a couple of surprises. The title is perhaps a bit over-worn but complements the glamorous portrait of the artist alongside her sleeve-notes which include the truism: "The harpsichord, intimate by nature, is nevertheless capable of a wider range of expression, including the flamboyant and virtuosic..." and the somewhat passé "The revival of the harpsichord in our time has seen renewed interest in composition for it...". I am sure this magazine's readers could supply a long list of 20th century revival pieces written for the harpsichord before Jacqueline Ogeil was born in 1968. However, she does also give some interesting harmonic details of the Chromatic Fantasia and remarks that the Fugue contains 10 of the 12 semitones within its subject, of relevance to Bach's interest in tempered tunings.

The harpsichord is a 1983 copy of a Dulcken by William Bright (aptly named) owned by the University of Melbourne. It is obviously a modern instrument but is particularly well-suited to the dissonant Scarlatti sonata K175 and the Hakim which even utilises the 'harp' stop. The performance is as sound as you would expect from a student of Colin Tilney and Gustav Leonhardt. Having thought initially that the repertoire was unadventurous — including as it does Bach, Handel and four Scarlatti sonatas from the ubiquitous Kirkpatrick selection of 60 — it is unusual to hear the Rameau *Troisième Concert* for solo harpsichord, quite legitimate but so frequently recorded as a trio accompanied by violin (or flute) and viol (or second violin); delightful though it is, knowing the trio version I still feel undecided as to whether Rameau's comment about the solo version leaving nothing to be desired was not a sales ploy! The Naji Hakim is a brilliant tour-de-force and the truly virtuosic playing on this 16-minute suite makes the CD well worth having, even if you already have a good performance of the Bach such as Kenneth Gilbert's. Naji Hakim (b.1955) is organist at La Trinité, the successor to Messiaen whose influence, along with that of Gershwin, is clearly evident.

PENELOPE CAVE

Franz Schubert:

Sonata in a minor opus 42; 2 Impromptus opus 142
Paolo Giacometti, fortepiano
Channel Classics CCS 10697

Arpeggione Sonate; 3 Sonatinas opus 137
Paolo Giacometti, fortepiano, Pieter Wispelwey, cello
Channel Classics CCS 9696

Schubert's a minor sonata D845 is the main work on Giacometti's solo disc. This superb piece is given a near-perfect rendering. Perhaps the opening tempo of the second movement is a little too deliberate, holding back the flow of the music. The use of a Salvatore Lagrassa piano (c.1815) is well-merited here. As an example of the many revelations it provides, the opening of the first movement's development section can be cited — where the changes of register of the main theme are clearly coloured on the instrument; likewise the delicate pianissimo of the d minor episode and the wonderful bass-tenor melody of the f minor episode. This recording proves how well Schubert understood the instrument of his time. The moderator pedal is also used to good effect in this recording.

The sonata is followed by the four Impromptus op.142. These too are well-played; however, I think that although individual moments are marvelously inventive, the structure of the pieces is often too discursive, at least for continuous listening as a set. Occasionally Giacometti's holding-back before a new phrase becomes a little mannered.

The same pianist, and indeed the same instrument, can be heard with Pieter Wispelwey on an equally high-quality disc of Schubert cello music (although none of it was originally written for that instrument by the composer). The Arpeggione sonata is a superb example of Schubert at his best. The use of a cello makes the music a little more extroverted, perhaps, than it would originally have sounded, but with playing as convincing as that found here only a pedant could object. Similarly with Wispelwey's own transcriptions of the three Schubert violin sonatinas op.137 which make up the rest of the disc.

Claude Debussy: L'Oeuvre de piano, Tome III

Stany David Lasry, Arcana A63

This disc of Debussy's *Préludes* forms volume three of Stany David Lasry's survey of Debussy's piano works for Arcana. The *Préludes* are perhaps the composer's most important collections of music, but it is doubtful whether they were ever intended for continuous listening as recorded here. Indeed, the very title prompts us to ask: preludes to what?

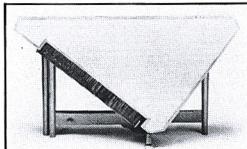
Debussy gives the descriptive titles at the end of each piece, whilst the heading is left blank, which surely assumes that the power of these *Préludes* to imprint a sensory vision on our minds depends on a corresponding pause for reflection afterwards. The modern aesthetic which pervades these works, when unrelieved, can seem rather dry, suffering in the same way as Impressionist paintings in the Musée d'Orsay — monotonous in their bourgeois, or inverted bourgeois, sensibilities. Yet, experienced singly, one can readily acknowledge many masterpieces in these collections.

This recording uses an Erard of 1874, some 30 years older than the compositions which were written between the end of 1909 and 1912. Lasry's approach is careful and objective, rightly refusing to sentimentalise the music, unlike many other performances which try to make the music appear more palatable than it really is. Performance details are well-judged and the playing often very beautiful. Just occasionally I found that dynamics were not sufficiently differentiated, one or two articulation marks were missed and balance between the hands not quite right. I longed for Lasry to let himself go at those points in the score where Debussy had written *fff* or *passionément*. The use of the Erard was especially noticeable when the sustaining pedal was used, and in the rich overtones appearing at *laissez vibrer* or other points; the differentiated compass of the instrument was welcome, more than compensating for a rather thin bass sound. A recording of great interest and integrity, which includes a well-judged performance of *La plus que lent*.

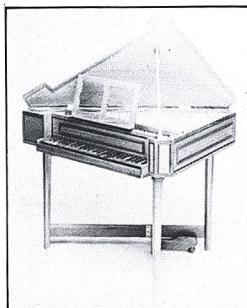
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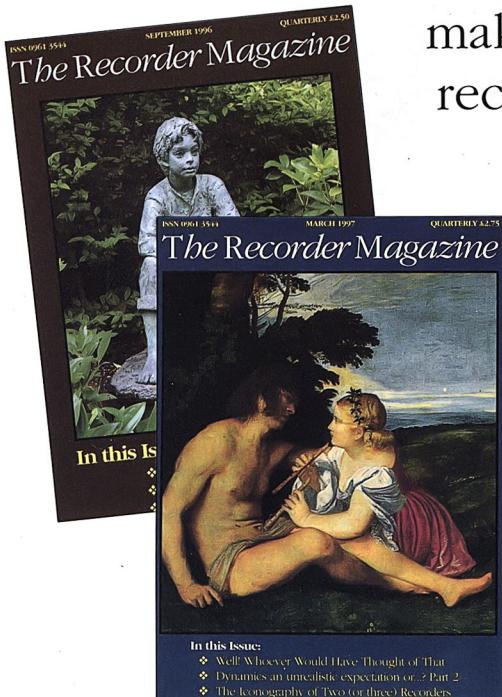
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