Harpsichord & fortepiano

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BOOK REVIEW

A Guide to the Harpsichord
by Ann Bond.
Amadeus Press. ISBN
1-57467-027-1 Price £22.50.

One of the hardest things in giving harpsichord workshops for mixed abilities is to pitch it so that the advanced player is not yawning with the boredom of having heard it all before and the beginner not floundering in a foreign vocabulary of which he understands almost nothing. Well one thing is for sure and that is that you cannot please all the people all the time, so it would be amazing if Ann Bond's *Guide* managed it, and inevitably she forgets whom she is addressing from time to time. I would have preferred to be "listening in" on her instruction to a specific recipient in the style of C.S. Lewis' *Letters to Malcolm* or even in the format of questions from the pupil and answers from the teacher (as in Valenti's book, *The harpsichord: Dialogue for Beginners);* these methods have the advantage of allowing the reader to take or leave what he requires without feeling personally slighted. This pedagogic style might have minimised the contradictions and repetitions which resulted from her expectation that the student would pick and choose which sections of the book to read. On the first page of her chapter "Starting to Play the Harpsichord", she states, "I have decided to concentrate on those who have some keyboard experience" but then goes on to instruct the reader on the next page, "First, make yourself comfortable at the keyboard; middle C (which is a bit to the right of centre) should be in front of you" and in her good chapter on the French Style, she states, "Most students are aware of the two types of courante" which seems a lot to expect even from the competent pianist, let alone the poor soul who needed guiding to his seat!

There are a number of minor inconsistencies, such as giving dates for some harpsichord builders but not others, and the provision of end-of-chapter checklists for some French and Italian harpsichord composers but not Spanish, English or German, although Bach's output gets a listing. I would prefer charts and tables such as are found in Mary Cyr's book, *Performing Baroque Music,* and would find Apel or Gillespie more helpful for such an overview of the keyboard repertoire, but Ann Bond rightly recommends many important publications for further study, including Howard Ferguson's comparative French ornament table to supplement her commendably concise "Common-sense View of Ornamentation" chapter. A newcomer to the harpsichord and its music would certainly find some good thumbnail sketches of some of the greatest works for harpsichord within this book but might still need some more structured help on beginner's repertoire. Ann Bond does sensibly suggest the need for a teacher, but I was surprised to read, "In order to learn the harpsichord, you need a teacher who has *to some extent* specialised in that instrument - not simply a keyboard teacher." (my italics) She goes on to say that the student "whose teacher has only a limited overview of the subject" should be able to get a practical foundation from this book and plenty of background information. Although I fervently hope that those wanting to learn the harpsichord would choose lessons and courses from teachers who were professionally trained harpsichordists (there are certainly enough of us about nowadays), I think Ann Bond does offer much of what she promises and this should usefully supplement work with a good teacher. I like the bold type for terms such as 'peau de bouffle', 'equal temperament' or 'thorough-bass' which makes it easy to locate subjects from the index. Sadly, the brief mention of 20th century harpsichord music in Appendix A is so inadequate it would have been better omitted altogether, but the addresses, information and bibliography at the end of the book are useful.

Her chapters on articulation and other techniques are thorough, practical and helpful, as is the one in which she gives specific teaching on four well-chosen pieces, and the chapters on Continuo playing and Pitch, Tuning and Temperament are excellent. I especially liked her description of the right way to accompany: "a good player underpins the singer's interpretation, but does not add a blatant commentary to it"; and a memorable description of Scarlatti using a couple of melody notes "as his sheet anchor, he embarks on magical voyages through kaleidoscopic sequences of keys." But best of all is the aside, "Always remember that when a harpsichord is moved to a different environment there will be some degree of stress." I believe she is referring to the instrument rather than to its owner but with this book in hand, the next generation of harpsichord enthusiasts is all set to listen intelligently and start to play, tune and move harpsichords with confidence.

PENELOPE CAVE

MUSIC REVIEWS

J.S.Bach: GoldbergVariations, BWV 988.
Wiener Urtext Edition, UT 50159.

This most recent edition of the Goldberg Variations(1996) is a joint collaboration between the esteemed Bach scholar Christoph Wolff and the harpsichordist Huguette Dreyfus. Based on Wolff's earlier *NBA* publication(1977), this new edition includes Critical Notes and an informative Preface by Wolff, whilst Dreyfus has written the Notes on Interpretation (which incorporates Bach's ornamentation table for his son, Wilhelm Friedemann).

The Critical Notes divide into three sections: Sources and Evaluation of Sources; the present edition; and, lastly, detailed notes on most of the individual variations. Dreyfus' contribution is practical and helpful - suggesting in Variation 3, for example, that the player might find it useful to divide the two-part (R.H.) counterpoint, initially, between the hands.

Although much of this publication is clearly laid out on good quality paper, there are occasions on which the pages appear somewhat cramped - the Aria itself, plus Variations 4 & 10, for example. In terms of practical page-turning, this Wiener Urtext scores over the Henle edition, for instance, with only two instead of three page-turns, the first of which occurs halfway through Variation 2, whilst the second is inconveniently placed approximately a quarter of the way through Variation 28.

The only small omission that I detected was the lack of repeat dots in the second half of Variation 8.

More controversial, in my opinion, is the editorial practice of inserting fermatas at the conclusion of those variations (6, 7, 9, 11, 23, 25 & 27) which lacked them in the first publication, which was supervised by J.S.Bach himself. Presumably, Bach made clear his intentions on this subject. To add seemingly extraneous and redundant additions in this matter is, surely, to contradict those intentions. In the notes for his Harmonia Mundi recording of this work (1987),Kenneth Gilbert clearly states: "During performance, the precise time-gaps between variations (or groups of variations) is [also] of vital importance. The original publication shows break points in the form of pauses over final barlines and these do not necessarily occur symmetrically after each group of three, as the arrangement of canonic variations might suggest". Surprisingly, Wolff offers no explanation of his views regarding this structurally crucial element of performance practice in this most mighty and majestic of works.

A disappointing *lacuna*, therefore, in an otherwise sound edition.

RICHARD LEIGH HARRIS

J.S.Bach et al, The Anna Magdalena Bach Book of 1725.
Edited by Richard Jones. The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. 1997.

The *et al* that has been added to the normal title for this famous book draws attention to the fact that not all the pieces in the book are by J.S.Bach. Some are by other members of his family, and others, possibly, by other composers such as Böhm and Petzold. For the interest of users of this book, more might have been said about these other composers outside the Bach family, as none are well known and the amount of music of theirs which survives is very small.

The attribution of the music here to a miscellany of composers raises questions about the extent to which J.S.Bach and his second wife were either the composers, editors or copyists of these pieces. C.P.E. Bach was evidently encouraged as a composer from his early years and as time progressed, but while it is clear that the contents of the book began to be compiled in 1725, it is not clear at what date the latest contents of the book were inserted. Was it about 1730 - or later, up to 1740?

This new edition comprises a selection from the book, leaving out the early versions of the first two French suites and the vocal items. This leaves 26 pieces here. Most are very short, and some are very easy, as many players and teachers will know. Unfortunately here the pieces are not numbered at all, and so users of the book will probably want to add the numberings 1-26 in the index at the front, on the pieces in the course of the book, and in the commentaries at the back.

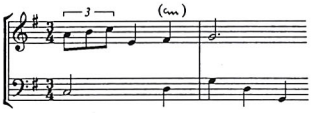
The commentaries at the back are very long and complicated, and will not readily appeal to children who will use this book. Many of the suggestions for performance in the "Performance Notes" ought to have been placed on the music in the course of the book, probably above the staves, or in footnotes on the relevant pages for easy reference and consideration. This is very important if a clear view is to be discovered as to how important matters of interpretation are to be tested and resolved. Pupils and teachers need to see suggestions for tempi at the head of the music, not in the back of the book.

The first piece, a *Menuet* in F major, immediately causes problems (as does the d minor *Polonaise* on page 24 and the G major *Aria* on page 30), and the problems are those of rhythm and grace notes. There is some evidence in the early 18th century that the rhythm ♩. ♪ in certain contexts needs to be interpreted as a triplet of quavers, *viz.* ♩♪♪, and in this *Menuet* these considerations need to be thought out in bars 1 and 11.

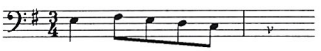
The interpretation of grace notes is not as simple as it may often appear, and the length of time they will last will not always be consistently the same in the same piece. Sometimes the main note involved needs an extra ornament to help it, and indeed such an ornament may often be thought to enhance the melodic line, as it might here in bars 4 and 16. There are no editorial ornaments in the music in this book, but pupils and teachers can add their own. In the first *Menuet*, a trill is needed on the E in bar 23, for instance.

In Couperin's *Les Bergeries* (1717) the consecutive fifths that are rather noticeable in bar 2 disappear if the first bass note is played as a crotchet instead of a quaver. Perhaps this piece was one of Anna Magdalena's favourites, and its presence in her book may encourage further investigation of the music of Couperin's sixth *Ordre*, a work in eight movements, of which this is No. 6. The work concludes with the delightful *La Commère* and *Le Moucheron*. In *Les Bergeries* there are many differences of detail between Couperin's movement and the simpler and easier version in the Bach volume.

The little *Menuet* in G (page 10) still comes along with queer wrong notes. Perhaps Anna Magdalena made a slip of the pen? In bars 15-16 and in bars 39-40 let's play



The left hand of bar 24 needs filling up to avoid curious feelings on the third beat. Why not play



The only chorale in the Anna Magdalena book that is included here is *Wer nur den lieben Gott* (page 14). Here an English title might have been added, as might also Bach's harmonisation of the chorale with a stanza of English words. The chorale is rarely found in English hymn books, but it may be found in the BBC Hymn Book, No. 361. It can also be found in the Novello edition of Bach's organ works, Vol 15, pp. 118-9, where the chorale harmonisation may be found alongside the magnificent organ prelude, BWV 642. These are both in a minor, like the piece in Anna Magdalena's book. Bach also used the chorale in Cantata 179, and Mendelssohn also chose it for inclusion in *St. Paul*, No. 9.

C.P.E. Bach's contribution to his step-mother's book seems to have consisted chiefly of marches! He must have been an annoying boy, always restive and anxious for lively action and entertainment. Perhaps he was keen on brass groups, and trumpeters especially, as these pieces seem to recall trumpets and drums. One might be reminded here of that memorable passage in Laurie Lee's autobiography *Cider with Rosie* (1959), where, in the last chapter, there is the account of a Harvest Festival service at Slad. The author's younger brother was three at the time, and overwhelmed by the grandeur and splendour of the appearance of the parish church. "'Is there going to be drums?' he asked loudly". The author added "It was a natural question, innocent and true. For neither drums, nor cymbals, nor trumpets of brass would have seemed out of place at that time."

The *March* in D (page 17) and the *March* in G (page 19) do recall trumpets and drums, while the awkward g minor *Polonaise* (page 18) may evoke some sort of windband. The simpler g minor *Polonaise* (page 20) might do with some editorial ornaments. The well-known *Musette* (page 22) has similar features to the marches and that first *Polonaise*, in that octave passages are contrasted with passages of harmony; it may well have been composed by C.P.E.Bach too. The tempo suggested for the *Musette* (c. 104)

is much too slow. It needs to go pretty fast, with its suggestion of a fairground band or buskers group playing among the stalls and around the roundabouts. The weird melodic line in bars 13-16 is pure farce and very suggestive of outdoor entertainment. Bars 1-2 might be played *mp* or *mf*, and bars 3-4 *ff*, and so on. The left hand in bar 4 needs fingering - 4121. Children often tend to muck this up by making a clumsy jump into the next bar, but the thumb can be brought in to avoid this. The concentration needed to get both hands to leap accurately in opposite directions in bars 4-5 often causes frustrating (or amusing) mishits! Play a fierce trill on the crotchet in the right hand at bar 10.

In the E flat *March* (page 22) - another possible effort from C.P.E - the left hand in bar 25 has become confused with the rhythm of the right hand. It may be best here just to play crotchets on all the beats.

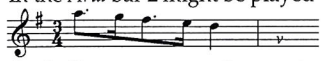
The d minor *Polonaise* (page 24) has problems with the interpretation of its grace notes, and some suggestions above the right hand stave would have been helpful here. The small quaver may be played approximately as an acciaccatura, a semiquaver, a quaver or a crotchet. The precise and exact rhythmical interpretations shown on page 37 seem very unfortunate here for a piece where carefree rhythmic freedom and variety can give great pleasure. In a short piece such as this (18 bars) it is important *not* to play the repeats in the identical way the section has been played the first time through. Varied repeats were the essence of 18th-century performance, and there are a large number of different ways of playing an 18th-century polonaise, minuet, march, and so on.

The *Solo* in E flat (page 26) is by C.P.E. Bach, and is the first movement of the E flat sonata Wq 65/7. This is the longest and most difficult piece in Anna Magdalena's book. The first version of the piece dates from 1736, and there was a revision in 1744. It was not published in the composer's lifetime. It was the first version of this movement that was copied into the Anna Magdalena book, and her book was still in progress therefore in 1736 or so. In the 1744 version of the movement the first bar consists of four demisemiquavers.

Unfortunately in this new edition the notation has not been fully modernised. The beats need to be subdivided in the left hand in bars 4, 6, 10, 20, etc,and in the right hand in bar 13. The antiquated presentation of the music may cause confusions and difficulties, and players need to be able to perceive the beats of the bar at sight. The last notes in bars 37ff can be mistaken for triplets, especially after bars 9ff and bar 36. On the second beat of bar 60 the right hand fingering 4132 may be preferred.

The *Aria* in G (page 30) became the theme of the Goldberg Variations, and it should be played *à la Sarabande* - in the French style, rather like the sarabandes in the same key in the fifth French suite and fifth Partita.

In the *Aria* bar 2 might be played



A similar sequence of notes is often played in this way in Bach's chorale prelude *Allein Gott*, BWV 662.

A charming little polonaise by J. A. Hasse ends this selection from Anna Magdalena's book. The accidental added to the ornament in bar 17 is superfluous, and an F sharp may be more in place in bar 19 rather than an F natural.

This book will be largely used by children with their teachers, and some of its features (especially its apparent difficulties and complexities) will not, unfortunately, appeal very much to those it may have been especially designed to interest, educate and entertain. As the question of ornaments and their performance is crucial to the music, it might have been better here to have reproduced the table of ornaments that all the Bach family used and which they were probably told to learn by heart. This is the one that J. S. Bach wrote out for Wilhelm Friedemann in his little keyboard book in 1720. The lad was very young at the time, and very keen: the table was very clear, and it says it all.

The technical demands of the 26 pieces here are not often very great, but the musical demands in terms of stylish and apt interpretation can be very considerable. The easiest pieces suit the Grade 1-2 level, while others reach forward to the Grade 4-5 level and beyond. The volume contains some very lovely and very memorable examples of melody, whoever the composers or editors and copyists may have been.

A misprint in the Introduction - Bach's Cantata 82 is *Ich habe genug*. This was for solo bass/baritone, but the Anna Magdalena book included one of the arias at a pitch suitable for soprano, and this again, like so many pieces in this volume, is a supreme example of Bach's melodic gifts.

GWILYM BEECHEY

Hans-Martin Linde: 'Notabene' Three pieces for harpsichord - Schott

The German flautist, conductor and composer, Hans-Martin Linde, wrote *Notabene* in 1991 although Schott's publication date is 1997. Although they are not as technically difficult, in style they remind me a little of Hans Werner Henze's *Six Absences*. I have used, and recommend, Linde's compositions for recorder; his exercises for recorder quartet cleverly incorporate technical and musical challenges for those learning to play in consort and his signature is evident in these harpsichord pieces. According to his CV, he "experiments with new compositional structures, but a link with tonality and old forms is nevertheless always detectable." They certainly demonstrate a pleasing contemporary minimalism, as economical as they are characterful. The first, *Miniludium*, fits onto one beautifully printed single page and each following piece increases by one page in length, lasting about six minutes in total. The clarity of the score is a joy to behold and Linde is precise in his playing indications. He does not go as far as Henze or Ligeti in giving actual registrations, but does give quickly alternating dynamic markings, and the option in the second piece, *Capriccioso*, for the use of a lute stop, not to mention knocking (I found my nameboard quite resonant!), and in the third piece, *Reminiscenza*, he requires an instrument with two registers: one stronger and one softer. In addition, the range required (from the bass G sharp beneath the stave although only up to the D above the treble stave) also contributes to suggest a two-manual harpsichord is what he has in mind. It is, perhaps, a pity that these expressive little pieces were not conceived for a small single manual instrument with one or two 8 foot stops and that colour is still partly seen in terms of registration, but Linde is not alone in this predilection and undoubtedly we need more performing harpsichordists to write harpsichord music!

I am frequently puzzled by the ambiguity about where to spread chords in modern pieces (before or after the beat: up or down), but as Linde meticulously notates many beautiful slow spread chords, where he does give an arpeggiation symbol, I am inclined to spread the chord before the beat. In one case, he shows a six-note chord divided between the hands; spreading up in the left and down in the right. Another frequent dilemma in revival-harpsichord music is interpreting ornamentation signs; perhaps this accounts for Linde using only one, the long trill (with a bracketed natural above it), but does it start on the main note or the one above? He is, however, specific about tied and articulated notes, using the neat device of a dotted slur to show over-holding in the haunting *Reminiscenza*. These mostly careful and specific markings show considerable sensitivity to the possibilities of expressive harpsichord-playing and would, I believe, make them an ideal introduction to learning 20th century harpsichord music.

PENELOPE CAVE

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DISC REVIEWS

Frescobaldi:

Toccate d'intavolatura di cimbalo et organo. Libro primo.
Rinaldo Alessandrini
Arcana A 904 (2 discs)

Although released back in 1993, Alessandrini's recording of Frescobaldi's *Toccate...libro primo* requires notice in this publication. Alessandrini, directing his ensemble Concerto Italiano, has spear-headed the assault on 'neoplatonic' Anglo-Saxon performances of Italian vocal music. In the informative notes to this recording he comments in reference to Frescobaldi's phrase *con affetti cantabili e con diversità di passi:* "I think that these words encapsulate the fundamental idea of Italian musical expression: *la cantabilità affetuosa* (passionate melodic character) and the alignment of contrasting ideas." These sentiments can be applied to both his work with Concerto Italiano and his impressive renditions of Frescobaldi's superb, yet fragile, keyboard works in the 1615/1637 publication.

Clearly a great deal of thought has been put into this recording. One of the clearest indications of this is the order in which the pieces are played. Toccatas are not left standing apart but are used as a framework in which to place the dances and variations. The pieces on disc 1 are all in d- or g-dorian, or g-mixolydian, whereas on disc 2 there is a move through a variety of modes — including a delightful set of pieces in e-phyrgian. Variety is created by having a swathe of pieces straddling the end of disc 1 and the start of disc 2 performed on the organ. Of course it would be self-defeating to listen to one or both discs straight through as if one were attending a recital.

Both instruments employed for the recording are ideal for this music. The harpsichord, which was formerly attributed to Celestini in the Haags Gemeentemuseum (Boalch 3 CELESTINI (A), G. 1605(A)), was also used by Robert Wooley in his 1985 Frescobaldi recording. The organ by Tomaso Meiarini in the church of S Maria del Carmine, Brescia, was erected in 1633 by Graziadio Antegnati II, since Meiarini himself had died of the plague in 1630. Perhaps there are too many changes of organ register, especially in the toccatas where the end result can seem a little too fragmentary. Organ tempi are sensibly slower than the harpsichord ones, but sometimes the result can appear a little laboured, as in *Partite11 sopra l'Aria di Monicha.*

These reservations are insignificant when Alessandrini's achievements are properly measured. He has applied the spirit of the *seconda prattica* to these textless pieces so that they speak — almost like *Madrigale ohne Wörten.* The refinement with which Frescobaldi's guide for players is put into practice leads to continuously sensitive and effective interpretations. The end results can be astonishing, no less so than in the *Partite cento* (Alessandrini persuasively argues for the removal of the final *Passacagli Altro Tono* which is recorded elsewhere on the discs). This famous piece seems to encompass the whole of early 17th century Italy, and the performer rises magnificently to the challenge of maintaining the architecture of the piece. Elsewhere the detailed, present-tense approach infects both variations and dance-movements, despite an overall stricter approach to measure in these genres, and the *Capriccio sopra la Battaglia* is performed *in stile concitato* (however I do find these battle pieces, I include here even *Tancredi e Clorinda,* a little past their best-before date). The meantone tuning helps with the delightful picquancy of many of Frescobaldi's modulations. In sum, even though there are other equally valid ways of approaching Frescobaldi, no one can afford to ignore the eloquent testimony of Alessandrini's consistently intelligent and well-recorded performances.

PH

J.S. Bach:

The Complete sonatas for obbligato harpsichord and a melodic instrument: Vol. 1 Geneviève Soly (harpsichord), Jeanne Lamon (violin), Jay Bernfeld (viola da gamba)
Analekta AN 2 8076
Vol. 2 Chantal Rémillard (violin), Jean-Pierre Pinet (flute), Geneviève Soly (harpsichord)
Analekta FL 2 3061
Vol. 3 Jean-François Rivest (violin), Christine Plubeau (viola da gamba), Geneviève Soly

(harpsichord)
Analekta FL 2 3062

Sonatas for viola da gamba and harpsichord
Richard Boothby (viola da gamba), Shalev Ad-El (harpsichord)
Chandos CHAN 0608
L'Italie en Allemagne [Music by Bach & Walther]
Geneviève Soly (organ)
ATMA ATM 2 9726

In the last issue I was complaining about the lack of originality in devising programmes for CDs, specifically referring to Bach's chamber music. The **three Analekta discs** show one way out of this impasse: each disc contains sonatas for different instruments with obbligato harpsichord. What is more, only the harpsichordist, Geneviève Soly, is a constant amongst the performers on these discs. And what a great team has been assembled.

Taking the violinists first, Jeanne Lamon (disc 1) approaches the sonatas with a Mediterranean warmth. Her performance of Sonata V sets the tone for what follows in every performance: Bach's music seen as humanly expressive rather than abstract and mathematical. Here is good playing without gimmicks, although perhaps some of the pauses are overlong — something which can be magical in a live performance but tends to sound rather mannered on a recording. On disc 2 Chantal Rémillard elicits an amazing sound from her violin, especially in the first movement of the f-minor sonata. Perhaps even better are her performances of the fast movements; the A-major sonata was just — virtuoso playing lightly worn — and the piece has an exhilarating finale. Jean-François Rivet (disc 3) gives expressive and powerful performances of the b-minor and E-major sonatas. In all these works Geneviève Soly ably complements the character of each of her musical partners, resulting in a fluid and sensitive ensemble.
The two flute sonatas are both recorded on disc 2 by Jean-Pierre Pinet. The flute sound here is beautiful, no more so than in the first movement of the b-minor sonata. The gamba sonatas are split between Jay Bernfeld playing the g-minor (disc 1) and Christine Plubeau playing the G and D major sonatas (disc 3). In my opinion Bernfeld's impassioned playing is a little too wayward, and borders too much on self-indulgence, to be truly satisfying. Christine Plubeau's playing is much more restrained and allows the music to speak more eloquently in some intelligent interpretations.

If I have any reservations about these discs it is not concerning the performances but rather the recordings. It seems to me that the harpsichord is generally too loud, something which is especially marked in the gamba sonatas, where the instrument, in the middle of the texture anyway, already presents engineers with problems of balance. It is a problem shared with a new recording of the three gamba sonatas by **Richard Boothby and Shalev Ad-El.** This is a pity as the performances here are musical and expressive, with slightly more upbeat tempos than found on the Soly discs, resulting in some spirited playing by Boothby. Shalev Al-Ed gives winning performances of two attractive Bach toccatas (BWV 913 & 914) on the copy of a Mietke harpsichord that he uses for this disc.

Geneviève Soly appears as solo organist on the disc ***L'Italie en Allemagne*** playing the 'Italian school' Karl Wilhelm organ at Notre-Dame-de-la-Défense, Montreal. The programme consists of Bach concerto transcriptions for organ (BWV 592 & 3) and harpsichord (BWV 972 & 974), but played here on the organ, along with the Canzona BWV 588 and two concerto transcriptions by Walther (LV 132 & 133). Laurentian sunlight reaches here as well as on the three Bach sonata discs which, along with Boothby and Al-Ed's, are highly recommended.

PH

Soler:

Sonatas for Harpsichord (Complete), Vol.3.
Gilbert Rowland, Naxos 8. 553464.

In his continuing journey through the complete Soler sonatas, Gilbert Rowland has committed to disc several absolute gems of this repertoire which, alas, are only too infrequently performed. As ever, this third volume gives the listener as many surprises as delights, harmonically speaking, and I found that I listened to the whole disc quite comfortably in one sitting.

Rowland is a steady, yet often brilliant interpreter of this music - neither wilful nor rhythmically eccentric, but secure, weighty and reliable, he communicates Soler's especial vigour as well as penetrating to the heart of the

darker pieces - the melancholic, but intensely moving Sonata No.117 in d minor (track 5), for instance.

Once more, Rowland has opted to use a copy of a French-style instrument by David Rubio. This together with the seemingly ample acoustics of the recording location (Epsom College Concert Hall) gives, in my opinion, too rich a resonance, particularly in passages of fast arpeggios,for example.

This selection of Sonatas shows us just how far Soler had travelled musically from his mentor Scarlatti embracing, as they do, the relatively new and frequently Alberti-based Classical style. Soler always remained his own man, however, and incorporated these elements into his own forthright and highly personal idiom. That such brilliant and often exuberant music should have flowed from Soler's pen amidst the austere conditions and surroundings of the Escorial monastery, is something to wonder at and to be thankful for, too.

Specific Sonatas that make their mark on this volume would have to include Nos.33 in G (featuring mordents & repeated notes in thirds), 34 in E (notable for the expressive modulatory sequences) and 69 in F, a wonderfully sparkling movement in duple time, as well as the aforementioned Sonata in d minor.

Revelatory music, then, in stylish and authoritative performances that can be thoroughly recommended.

Richard Leigh Harris

Schubert:

Piano Works Vol. 2
Trudelies Leonhardt
Globe GLO 5167

Sonatas D566, D664; 2 Impromptus Op. 90
Olga Tverskaya
Opus 111 OPS 30-193

The main work on **Trudelies Leonhardt's** disc is the c-minor sonata D279. This sonata, like so many of Schubert's, is incomplete, and the end result here is unsatisfactory, something that could have been avoided if she had taken Badura-Skoda's sensible advice of using D346 to 'complete' the sonata. Playing is careful and neat but the first movement *(Allegro moderato)* is too *moderato*, which in turn leads to the *Andante* having more of the character of an *Adagio*. Occasionally the playing seems overly expressive, sapping the climaxes of all their energy, although that is not to say that there is not a good deal to admire in Leonhardt's detailed shaping of passagework. In the minuet, however, the character of the movement is nicely caught, with good use of the moderator in the trio.

The rest of the disc is filled with smaller works. The Allegretto D915 and Variations D576 are given committed performances. Most of the disc is taken up with the Dances D365. I have no idea why anyone should want to record these — this is utilitarian music that is difficult for the performer to get through without yawning, let alone an audience. Anyway I should think a less pretentious instrument would be more suitable, coupled with a more robust approach to the music. Leonhardt is squandering unwanted artistry on these pieces with the result that they lack vitality. On the other hand, she gives a convincing performance of the Adagio D178. The captivating playing here leads one to wish that we could hear the performer tackle some of Schubert's more substantial music.

Olga Tverskaya's Schubert disc (see the profile of this pianist in the last edition of *H&F*) contains the sunny Sonata D664: three movements, with perhaps a missing minuet or scherzo, although the lack of a third movement does not spoil this piece. I find this an incredibly uplifting work and equal to any of his other sonatas. Tverskaya's playing tends, like Leonhardt's, to be full of rather too much manipulation of the tempo, halting the flow of the music, and like Leonhardt again the slow movement seems too slow. In recompense, however, Tverskaya's playing is full of detailed insight and is bathed in a wonderful warmth. The disc couples this work with the Sonata D566, which again is missing its final movement; although a solution — less than perfect perhaps — has been offered by Kathleen Dale (and followed by Badura-Skoda) of completing the Sonata with D506, this suggestion is rejected here and thus what we get is a Sonata ending in the wrong key. How can the performer's sensibilities not be offended? Two of Schubert's op.90 Impromptus are also recorded here in confident and mature interpretations.

Both Leonhardt and Tverskaya use excellent Viennese instruments, the former a Seidne (with an annoying buzzing

string), and the latter a copy of a Brodmann by David Winston (although the CD cover is misleading with its implication that the Brodmann is an original).

PH

Fortepiano plus

Haydn: XII Lieder für das Clavier; Arianna a Naxos
Andrea Folan (soprano), Tom Beghin (fortepiano)
Bridge BCD 9059

Schubert: Goethe Lieder
Thierry Félix (bass-baritone), Paul Badura-Skoda (fortepiano)
Arcana A 37

A Grand Duo: The Clarinet and the Early Romantics
Colin Lawson (clarinet), Neal Peres da Costa (fortepiano)
Clarinet Classics CC0015

Weber: Symphonies 1 & 2; Konzertstück
Melvyn Tan (fortepiano), The London Classical Players conducted by Roger Norrington
EMI Classics 7243-5-55348-2-8

There is no truth in the old histories which mark the birth of German Lied with Schubert. Haydn, for example, was a very fine song composer. Too much emphasis has been made of the supposed transition from strophic to *durchkomponiert* songs, as if a repetitive melody is somehow a lesser specimen of artistic merit — a view which damns practically all 20th century popular song at a stroke. Tom Beghin believes that the distinction between strophic and modified strophic was probably more elastic pre-Schubert, with the performer himself or herself varying the written notation. This is a persuasive argument and one of the most appealing features of the disc of **Haydn songs** which Beghin has made with Andrea Folan is their moderately free approach to the score — in both the vocal and the piano parts.

Beghin's playing is excellent, although occasionally I felt that a little more of the variety of tone colour which he elicits during the performance of the cantata *Arianna a Naxos* could also have been brought to the Lieder. I failed to warm to Andrea Folan's voice or singing style. Characterisation is often heavy-handed and obvious, and pronunciation of both German and Italian is mangled (I could not work out whether this is a deliberate affectation or not). Her voice has a tightly-controlled but pretty well continuous level of vibrato, which is used neither to embellish a pure sound nor to colour the vocal line in a more traditional way. It is particularly annoying on long notes and during slow passages. Nevertheless, the disc can be taken as a welcome exploration of a still too-little-known repertory.

The **Schubert** song disc under review, on the other hand, explores a very well-known repertory (Schubert's Goethe settings) with literal fidelity. The musicianship is masterful, as one might expect from Badura-Skoda playing on a splendid Conrad Graf. Thierry Félix's voice is powerful, and although there are no problems of balance on the recording, one can hear him straining to lighten his voice — which can at times lead to an unsteady and almost expressionistic tone. Big voices and CD technology can create problems that may not be apparent in a live performance. His characterisation can also be rather heavy in simple songs like *Heidenröslein*, but in the more complex works such as *Prometheus* and *Grenzen der Menschheit* the singer comes into his own with genuinely authoritative and moving performances.

I have nothing but praise for the disc of **clarinet and piano music** from Colin Lawson and Neal Peres da Costa. The main work on the disc is Weber's famous *Grand Duo Concertant*, which is given a revealing performance on period instruments. Sparkling virtuosity from both players is interleaved with some telling reflective moments. It is also excellent to report that the *Andante con moto* really was played *con moto*! This performance by itself would make the disc worth buying, but assembled on the disc is an impressive programme of music by Burgmüller, Danzi, Stadler and Loewe. The Stadler is a historic curiosity with its quotes from the likes of *The Magic Flute* and *God save the King*, and I found Danzi's *Sonata Concertante* interesting, if a little prosaic. But the wonderful Romantic colours of Burgmüller's *Duo* and Loewe's *Schottische Bilder* are really magical: true gems. The liner notes are uncharacteristically informative and interesting. Highly recommended.

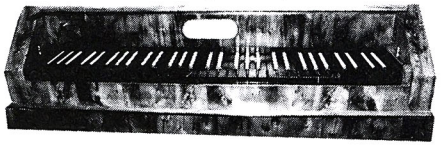
Melvyn Tan and Roger Norrington tackle another of **Weber's** best-known works, the *Konzertstück* op. 79. This is a superb performance with the London Classical Players which matches up to Weber's verdict on performance: "All depends on the sensitivity of the human individual, if this is lacking, little

help can be expected from the metronome." This recording surpasses the one on the 1991 Nimbus disc with Christopher Kite and the Hanover Band under Roy Goodman, as good as that performance is, particularly Kite's playing; but the London Classical Players and the EMI recording engineers allow one to really enjoy Tan's performance. I also found the slightly more incisive *Presto assai* more convincing. A bonus is that Tan is performing on a copy of a Streicher by Derek Adlam, a type of instrument that we know Weber possessed.

The coupling on this disc is unusual, as the Konzertstück is a mature work (completed on the eve of the première of *Der Freischütz*) whereas the two symphonies are early. Symphony no.1 is extrovert and fun, giving the London Classical Players a chance to show off their superlative wind-playing, and a good case is made here for the work despite the composer's own doubts. Symphony no.2 shows traits of what was to become Weber's mature style, and is again excellently played. It is good to see period instrument performances allowing reassessment of works like these — not masterpieces, perhaps, but not worthy of neglect either.

PH

FORTEPIANO
after Schantz, Vienna, c.1795



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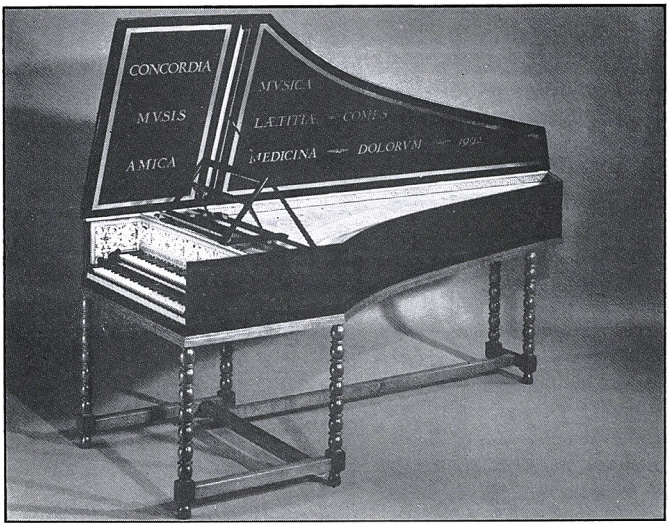

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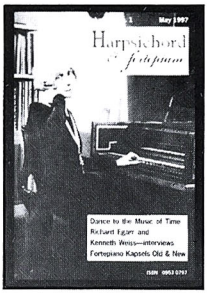

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