

Harpsichord & fortepiano

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Musical Instrument Research Catalog
(MIRCat)

MUSIC REVIEWS

G F Handel:

Overture to Rinaldo. Concerto grosso Op.3 No.6 (First Movement).
Arranged for Organ/Harpsichord by Pastör de Lasala. Saraband Music SM 8 (10 Hawkins Street, Artarmon, NSW 2064, Australia), 1997

Saraband Music is a new series of editions whose first ten issues include many items for viols, including duets for tenor viols from early 17th-century English sources and 18th-century French sources, and items for bass viol from Hume's *Ayres* (1605) and from the works of Christopher Simpson.

Volume 8 in the series consists of arrangements for organ solo of two works by Handel — the overture to *Rinaldo* (1711), arranged here for manuals and pedals, and the first movement of the Concerto grosso in D, Op.3 No.6 (1734), arranged here for manuals only. Both arrangements have been made largely from the Chrysander edition.

The *Rinaldo* overture may work quite well in this arrangement, although the pedal part is at times demanding, and might benefit from being less active at times and being placed an octave lower, especially in the Giga. In his preface the arranger acknowledges John Walsh's Handel's *Sixty Overtures ... set for the Harpsichord or Organ (c 1750)*, and players might find it of interest to consult the Dover edition of this collection (New York 1993), where the overture to *Rinaldo* is on pages 91-94. These keyboard arrangements were very popular in the 18th century.

The two-stave arrangement of the concerto movement may be compared with its concerto source as well as with its earlier appearance in the opera *Ottone*. Here, players may care to add some fingering for themselves, and may

like to simplify or adjust some of the characteristic violin writing which does not always transfer very idiomatically to the keyboard.

Alternative arrangements are supplied for two passages in the movement, the second one, for bars 56-60, being a simplification of the version in the main body of the text. The last note in bar 58 (alto) should be A.

Gwilym Beechey

Haydn:

Keyboard Concerto in D, Hob. XVIII:11. Edited by Horst Walter and Bettina Wackernagel, piano reduction and cadenzas by Sonja Gerlach. G. Henle Verlag, Munich 1998

Haydn's popular D major concerto 'per il clavicembalo o fortepiano' appeared, astonishingly, in no fewer than three editions in 1784, in Paris (July), Vienna (August) and London (September) respectively. We do not know for whom it was written, but my private theory is that it (rather than the G major concerto Hob. XVIII:4 as Robbins Landon thinks) was for the blind Viennese player Maria Theresa Paradies, who was certainly in Paris between April and October 1784. A newspaper report of one of her concerts there says that she performed on a fortepiano, but she is known to have played the harpsichord in London a few months later. Haydn's music seems to suit either instrument well, though perhaps the more incisive sound of the harpsichord is more appropriate for the *acciaccature* and chains of trills in the *Rondo all'Ungarese*. Haydn himself was a bit of a conservative, and may not have possessed a fortepiano of his own until 1788.

This edition presents an accurate solo part, together with a reasonably playable piano reduction of the accompaniment, mercifully lacking the automatic octave doubling of the bass that one finds in many a piano arrangement 'of the old school'. I wish, though, that Henle would give up their irritating habit of adding fingering to their

otherwise clean editions of keyboard music. A player who needs to be told how to finger a D major scale is unlikely to be attempting a Haydn concerto! The preface rejects the various contemporary cadenzas as 'certainly not Haydn's' (no doubt true) and 'ill-suited for concert performance today' (how arrogant can you get?), in favour of new ones by Sonja Gerlach. I am afraid they cannot be recommended: they are pretty unimaginative, and there are some clumsy and implausible harmonic progressions. My advice would be to play the originals (even if they are not by Haydn himself), or just simple flourishes along the lines of Mozart's earliest cadenzas to his K.246, which are only four bars long and do not wander off into foreign keys.

Richard Maunder

Handel:

Keyboard Suites and Pieces (London 1733). Edited by Ellwood Derr. G. Henle Verlag, Munich 1998.

Derr has done a superb job of editing Handel's second set of *Suites de Pièces pour le Clavecin*, published (though not for the first time) by Walsh in 1733. Every possible alternative source has been consulted, variant versions of movements are all printed in the Appendix, and a full critical commentary in both English and German is included. Footnotes to the music direct the reader to the commentary whenever there are alternative readings or notational ambiguities. If only all editions were like this one!

My only niggle has nothing to do with Derr's exemplary work: as in the Haydn concerto, Henle will insist on adding fingering. It is particularly out of place in such a beautiful Urtext edition; and comparison with the contemporary fingering in the alternative version of the G major *chaccone* shows just how anachronistic is Henle's. Can the publisher not be persuaded to abandon this intrusive and unhelpful practice?

Richard Maunder

Romantic piano music

A series of editions from both Schott/Universal Edition and Henle provide an impressive survey of Romantic piano music, most of which is too well-known to merit discussion of the music contained in the volumes under review. Beethoven's Piano Sonatas Vol. 1 (Wiener Urtext Edition, UT 50107, Schott/Universal Edition, 1997, ed. Peter Hauschild) takes us up to and including Op. 22. The text is presented clearly, and the editor chiefly uses first editions (and a corrected engraver's copy of Op. 22) and other early sources. It is a pity, therefore, that the detailed notes are contained in a separate volume — the growing trend of publishing text and commentary apart is to be greatly deplored. In this case it means that performers are bereft of information about performance practice, including ornaments, numerous problematic moments in the text marked by the editor with an asterisk referring to the missing commentary, and having to make suppositions such as that the italic fingering is from contemporary sources. Errors I spotted include: Op. 10/1/ii b. 10 sq1 LH pitch; Op. 10/2/ii bb.123-4 RH pitch; and Op. 10/2/iii b.129 LH min pitch. The introduction by the editor is disappointingly vague and treads over well-worn territory. The volume, like the Schubert (see below) is bound so that it does not easily stay open. All of these flaws reduce the usefulness of what should have been a first-rate edition.

Potentially more interesting is the edition of Beethoven's incidental music for Goethe's tragedy *Egmont*, Op.84 (Henle, 1998, ed. Helmut Hell). Whilst the rekindling of interest in contemporary arrangements of orchestral and chamber works is to be welcomed for bringing about a broader picture of keyboard writing, the piano reduction in hand, evidently not by the composer himself, fits uneasily into this tradition. In fact it was the original publisher's unwillingness to bring out a full score of the orchestral work that led to the

commission of this reduction. Of the nine movements, the Overture is the most well-known and fits well under the fingers to make an interesting addition to the repertory. The other movements include two songs, four entrances, a melodrama and a final 'symphony of victory', none of which make much free-standing sense without the drama. This edition, without a detailed commentary, nevertheless is a fascinating Beethoven document.

The first volume of Schubert's still too little-known piano sonatas (Wiener Urtext Edition, UT 50220, Schott/UE, 1997 ed. Martino Tirimo) succeeds in its ambition of becoming the most reliable edition of these works available. We have eight early sonatas here with an appendix containing the fragment D154 and Minuet D227A. There is an excellent preface with notes on the publication history of the sonatas, the sources used and a useful essay on performance practice. Detailed notes appear at the end. The only trivial error I noticed was a slight misprint occurring on: p. 83 b. 65 RH flat sign on line instead of space. It is particularly good to see early printed rhythmical synchronisation reproduced here where it modifies the written notation. An exemplary edition; congratulations to the editor.

Schumann's wonderful *Davidsbündlertänze* (Wiener Urtext Edition, UT 50098, Schott/UE, 1997, ed. Reinhard Kapp) is also given a marvellous edition by the same publishers. The text is presented with full introduction, critical notes and even somewhat schoolmasterly homilies to aid interpretation. It is only spoilt, as are all the editions under review (except the *Egmont*), by the gratuitous peppering of fingerings.

Editions of Chopin's *Ballade op. 23* (Henle, 1976 ed. Ewald Zimmermann), *Etude op. 10* (Henle, 1983, ed. Zimmermann), *Polonaise op. 53* (Henle, 1990 ed. Zimmermann) and *Waltz Op. 64 No. 2* (Henle, 1978, ed. Zimmermann) are offprints from

larger volumes. Inoffensive editions without any critical commentary. More useful are Liszt's transcription for piano of his three *Liebesträume* (Henle, 1998, ed. Ernst-Güntner Heinemann) and Grieg's third volume of his *Lyric Pieces Op. 43* (Henle, 1998, ed. Einar Steen-Nökleberg & Heinemann). These pieces with little textual complications come with foreword and critical notes. Brahms' *Piano Sonata in C Op. 1* (Wiener Urtext Edition, UT 50102, Schott/UE, 1997, ed. Christian Martin Schmidt) is one of those pieces at which you can vent all frustration and aggression. The edition is excellent, with notes on the work itself, its interpretation, and a full critical commentary. Both publishers have done well to provide us with increasingly reliable editions of 19th-century piano music, and, although the lack of commentaries in some volumes is to be lamented, the inclusion of notes on performance practice in a repertory where, until recently, there has been little belief that such notes are needed, is to be welcomed.

PH

CONCERT REVIEWS

From Distant Lands
South Bank, London 3-5 Sept 1999

An exception to the typically parochial view of early music is that of the South Bank Early Music Weekend under the inspired directorship of Philip Pickett. The theme 'From Distant Lands' offered groups from South America, Holland, Spain and Germany as well as Pickett's own New London Consort. The whole weekend was exhilarating, and there was both music-making of the highest quality as well as an exploration of a variety of repertoire, much of it revealing. With salsa dancing, lectures and children's events the South Bank weekend is a model of its kind.

On Friday evening the **Camerata de Caracas**, under their charismatic director Isabel Palacios, kick-started the weekend with an exuberant and foot-tapping performance of South American Baroque music, a melting-pot where many very different cultures met: a truly exploratory and wonderfully enjoyable concert. The next day the **New London Consort** gave its own account of songs from Jacobean court masques with Joanne Lunn, Andrew King and Simon Grant as the first-rate singers. Like everything Pickett touches, this repertoire was looked at anew, nothing taken for granted, and as a result even old favourites sounded young and fresh. This was followed by **The Royal Wind Music** under Paul Leenhouts, whose twelve players performed on every conceivable recorder and delighted us with the intricate and beautiful English and German consort music. These two concerts both prove there's still life in the 'core' early music repertoire if you know where to look or how to think. The following day **Andreas Staier** gave a recital of Mozart on the fortepiano. Personally I did not warm to his playing, which I think misrepresents the composer and contemporary performance practice; but, in fairness, I should report that the concert was very well-received by the audience. In the evening **Hesperion XX** tackled medieval Spanish music with their usual colourful and imaginative approach. When musicianship is as good as this -- and none better than the wonderful voice of Montserrat Figueras -- who cares about authenticity? The weekend's journey ended in a realm which the debate on authenticity can't really enter: that of Beowulf as recited by **Benjamin Bagby**. How I have come not to hear this before I do not know, but I was completely moved by the performance which left me on a real high.

PH

*Sharona Joshua (fortepiano)
Purcell Room, 25 November 1999*

The young fortepianist Sharona

Joshua showed in her recital that she is not yet ready to fall into an easy contentment regarding playing style, all questions being settled. Rather, she is still questioning some of the accepted 'practices' that we so regularly hear. She showed this most clearly in her use of pedal. While we might quibble about whether or not Haydn and Mozart would have imagined their music played with knee-levers, it is certain that knee-levers were available at the time, and the question is (even if Mozart's own piano might not have knee-levers, or Haydn's own Schantz was perhaps a square): what would these composers have done when performing on instruments which did have these capabilities? To suggest that they would have ignored these technical developments is to fly in the face of history. At what period have composers ever refused the challenge of technological change? Indeed, as Joshua would no doubt assert, judging from this performance, such expensive and popular mechanisms would not have had minimal use either. Her answer to the question of how to use them was basically one of following through the musical line or phrase, a practice which, on period instruments such as the Barlow copy of a Johann Schantz (c 1795) on which she played, does not create the jarring which such a technique applied on a later instrument would produce; rather, it added a beautiful colouristic patina to the tone. No more so than in the opening of Mozart's Fantasy in c minor. There would be a danger in following this technique through too systematically, but Joshua is too much of a musician to be so strait-jacketed. It was obvious from her performance that careful consideration had been given to context each time the knee-lever was used.

Joshua's fortepiano-playing has certainly come a long way in the last two-or-so years, no doubt benefitting equally from her rigorous classical training and her iconoclastic approach to the harpsichord. Her performances of Haydn's Andante and variations in

f minor (Hob.XVII/6), and Beethoven's Sonata in Eb major Op.7 no.4, in addition to the Mozart Fantasy and Sonata in c minor (KV 475 & 457), electrified the audience at the Purcell Room. Here at last is a player who can provide some opposition to Staier's hegemony in the field. Both fortepianists performed the Mozart in the same London season, inviting comparison. Whereas to my mind Staier's playing is aggressive and somewhat neurotic, Joshua's performance seemed bold and confident. We eagerly await other concerts in which she will leave us invigorated and refreshed, and we can only hope that she will also turn her attention to some of the other performance features that are so easily taken for granted.

AH

*The Bach Ensemble / Joshua Rifkin
Southwell Minster, 26 November
1999*

Congratulations to all the enterprising bodies who ganged together to bring Rifkin's Bach Ensemble to the beautiful minster at Southwell. This American ensemble has a mellifluous and melting style (not for them the exaggerated gestures of certain German groups we could name), which is instantly recognisable from their one-to-a-part recordings and live performances of Bach. Apropos Pamela Nash's recent articles in our magazine, their programme consisted of Bach arrangements: the Ouverture in D (3rd Orchestral Suite without the trumpet, drums and oboes); the Concerto in Eb for oboe (reconstructed from various Bach cantatas, and also known in another version in the E major concerto for harpsichord BWV 1053); and the Trio Sonata in G (reconstructed from 2 of Bach's other chamber works), the programme ending with Brandenburg 5.

The opening Ouverture lacked a certain cohesion — the playing was fluent but a certain insecurity crept in at times, although to hear the Air

played airily was delightful. Stephen Hammer was the soloist in the oboe concerto and this proved more enjoyable — the instrument singing out with great beauty with never a moment of harshness. We had been told before the concert began that refreshments had run into a spot of bother; how fortunate then that we ran into some enterprising friends who had come well-prepared with flask of coffee and chocolate biscuits! Whether this affected my mood in the second half I do not know, but I enjoyed the playing much more. The trio sonata was superbly played, with Linda Quan and Emlyn Ngai wonderfully together. Brandenburg 5 was omitted as the flautist was indisposed, but as this gave us another chance to hear Stephen Hammer, this time in the Oboe Concerto BWV 1060R, there was little cause for regret. All in all a first-rate evening's music making.

PH

A Bach Christmas
New London Consort/Philip Pickett
Queen Elizabeth Hall, 22 December
1999

Acknowledgement of Rifkin's pioneering one-to-a-part Bach work, which has included performances and recordings of revelatory beauty, was made in the programme notes to Pickett's 'A Bach Christmas'. The first half consisted of a performance of the Magnificat in the earlier Eb version which includes inserted texts — striking choral interjections which make this version as valuable as that as the more familiar one in D. The whole was performed with an exemplary combination of sensitivity and verve, and in the acoustics of the QEH no gravitas was lost through the absence of the traditional multi-part choral forces and a great deal of intensified energy was thereby gained. The second half included excerpts from Parts I to III of the Christmas Oratorio, making it much more in line with the earlier tradition of Schütz. The complete Oratorio, performed in one go, can suffer from the repetition of the

formal units of the six cantatas from which it is made; the abridgement in this performance allowed the momentum to run onward with the Christmas story, whilst allowing us to hear some of the heavenly arias, such as the wonderful *Bereite dich, Zion* sung by William Purefoy. The real stars of the show, however, were the members of the whole ensemble, especially in the choral numbers, insightfully led by Pickett. This Bach, minus the accretions of Victorian performing tradition, revealed a more mystic Bach, a Bach truly symbolising, like Christmas, the union between Earth and Heaven.

PH

Zeitgeist: Bach Flute Sonatas
Davitt Moroney: *Bach French Suites*
Purcell Room, 9 January 2000

The South Bank Early Music Series was launched in the Millennium by Moroney's reading of Bach's Six French Suites. A packed Purcell Room listened with rapt attention. I may be in the minority, but I did feel that such a programme was unimaginative to say the least, and the suites gained nothing from being heard one after the other. Moroney played with his customary care, and his scholarly interpretation seemed aptly French in this music. Just occasionally, however, Moroney played a passage with a certain phrasing or rhythmic shape that revealed hidden beauties in the music. I just wonder whether there is a Romantic inside this performer trying to escape? A little more freedom might have lifted his playing from something admirable to something inspirational. The audience, however, loved it as it is.

In a radical re-think of programming, each of the main concerts is now preceded by a shorter one given by younger artists. This is a truly excellent idea, giving the audience a real feast of music whilst allowing young artists valuable exposure. So a packed Purcell Room heard a performance of Bach flute sonatas from the duo Zeitgeist, consisting of Dorothea Seel on flute and Sharona Joshua on

harpsichord. Joshua's playing continues to mature and much of her performance, both in the obbligato and continuo sonatas, could only be described as breathtaking. She had clearly thought a great deal about allowing the harpsichord to breathe, and, what is rarer, has a technique to match these aspirations. Dorothea Seel made a brave attempt at very difficult music and would have benefitted from a rest: a solo by Joshua would have made a welcome break. Lighting was changed to suit each movement, and the success of this duo is such that after a couple of movements I ceased to notice the lighting at all, concentrating entirely on the music. These performers aimed at a depth of musicianship that Moroney only hinted at.

PH

DISC REVIEWS

Louis Couperin, Jean-Henri D'Anglebert:
Harpsichord Suites / Pavane
Jacques Ogg, harpsichord
Globe: GLO 6044

This excellent recording is for me a sort of antidote to the austerity and stiffness that have characterised some past renditions of Louis Couperin and the Chambonnières school. Jacques Ogg handles this exacting testing-ground for harpsichord touch masterfully, but above all it is his narrative gift which allows the listener to get straight to the heart of the music's affect, cutting through the complexity of this most difficult harpsichord repertoire, and without missing a single detail of internal line and texture. The sincerity of Ogg's musicianship is underlined throughout by deliberate fingerwork and logical phrasing and although ornaments are not uniformly pristine, the over-riding technical clarity is strong, reinforcing the expressivity behind the notes. This is keenly felt in both

the composers' *Tombeaux: de M. Blancrecher* and *M. Chambonnières* (tracks 10 and 24) where melodic line is cleanly delineated and coaxed from the instrument. In the unmeasured preludes, Ogg's meticulous attention to structural detail is balanced by his persuasively vocal phrasing; the performance of D'Anglebert's d minor *Prelude* (17) is direct and authoritative, but imbued with a spaciousness befitting the serene nobility of this music. Tempi throughout almost always felt just right, even the surprisingly brisk treatment of the *Bransle de Basque* from Couperin's *Suite in F Major* (8). There are perhaps a couple of instances where the pulse needs a stronger, more rigid presence, for instance in the *Courante* from Couperin's *Suite in g minor* (14); here an over-consciousness concern for rhetorical space and nuance is allowed to inhibit the metrical stability.

Three harpsichords are used, all by Joop Klinkhamer. The distinctive lightness of the quilling in the honey-toned Donzelague instrument, used for the *Suite in F* by Couperin, is beautifully controlled by Ogg. Couperin's *Pavane* and *Suite in g* are played on the more strident and hard-edged Vaudry harpsichord. This instrument comes across a touch abrasively for the *Pavane* (for which I would have preferred the warmth of the Donzelague harpsichord), but its more focused sound becomes increasingly compelling throughout the *Suite*. A Ruckers copy (reproduced from the original which exists without the later French adaptations) is used for the d'Anglebert, reflecting not only the general seventeenth century French predilection for Flemish harpsichords, but also that d'Anglebert's own instrument collection included a Ruckers. Its dark yet searing tone sounds particularly well for the introspective language of d'Anglebert's *Suite in d minor* and for projecting the distinctive polyphony of the dance movements' inner voices.

Recording quality is direct and clean but with a soft bloom of acoustic reverb which adds to the personal quality of the recording. There is an informative sleeve-note on the historical context of the music although no specific reference is made to the chosen programme.

Pamela Nash

Froberger: Keyboard Music

Enrico Baiano (harpsichord):
Symphonia SY 96152
Siegbert Rampe (harpsichord):
Virgin Classics 7243 5 45259 2 6
Christophe Rousset (harpsichord):
Harmonia Mundi HMT 7901372

I have to say that I have reservations about all three of these Froberger recitals. It is true that the composer directed that his *Tombeau sur la mort de M. Blancheroche* should be played 'lentement a la discrétion sans observer aucune mesure', and a few other pieces such as the lament on the death of Emperor Ferdinand III are marked 'lentement avec discrétion' (though not, it should be observed, 'sans observer aucune mesure'); but I cannot believe he intended total rhythmic anarchy, in which a quaver on one beat can be noticeably shorter than a semiquaver on the next, and what are notated as chords are broken more slowly than written-out arpeggios. The danger with this style of playing (and all three performers are surprisingly similar in their approach — a future student of historical performance practice will immediately identify it as 'c.2000') is that it quickly becomes wearisome to the listener. Without rhythm, without a sense of harmonic purpose, without any discernible melodic flow, the music is nothing more than a series of unconnected gestures, and what was meant to be a means of heightened expression becomes self-defeating. On these discs the 'unmeasured' style is extended even to the allemandes, apparently on the grounds that some 'have programmatic titles such as "Lament on the grievous loss of ...Ferdinand IV, King of the

Romans" (Suite VI)'(Baiano) and are therefore 'character pieces....without any absolute connection to the metre'(Rampe); but in fact no piece with such a title is actually called an allemande, and as it happens the lament for Ferdinand IV is not marked 'avec discrétion'. It is hard to believe that pieces with the title of a dance are really meant to have no perceptible beat at all.

That said, there is much to enjoy in each of these recitals, especially in the other pieces where all three performers show that they can play in reasonably strict time, give or take a little modern-style 'rubato' (but are Froberger's sarabandes all meant to be slow?). Rampe plays four instruments from the Beurmann collection: a Ruckers of 1628 (though it underwent *ravalement* in 1728), a Spanish harpsichord by Bergaños of 1620, a Celestini virginal (Venice 1587), and a Bohemian harpsichord by Miklis (Prague 1671). The Ruckers sounds as if it was thoroughly modernised, with the typically 18th-century French plummy bass, so is hardly what Froberger would have played in Paris in the 1650s. The Bergaños, originally a two-manual transposer but whose keyboards were aligned in 1726, has some Flemish features, and is better balanced: it is a pity that Rampe uses it only for two of the Italian-style toccatas. Even the Miklis, though certainly from a Hapsburg city, is rather more Northern European in style than its Viennese counterparts would have been, although its expressive and gentle voicing suits the two partitas very well and is a welcome relief after the rather aggressive Ruckers. Rousset plays a Couchet of 1652, rebuilt (according to Boalch 3) by Blanchet in 1701 as a two-manual with an added 4' (it was originally a single manual with just two 8' ranks). It seems to retain more of its 17th-century character than the Ruckers, and sounds particularly well in the music Froberger wrote in Paris and London, although I would question the changes of manual in the lament for Ferdinand III (where Rampe does the same). Baiano uses a modern copy (by Gianfranco Facchini, who also made one of the

instruments used by Bötticher on his Poglietti recording, see below) of an anonymous 17th-century Italian harpsichord, whose short-scaled sound is closer to that of the instruments Froberger would have known in Vienna. It may seem a little bland when compared to the antique instruments on the other discs, but it has a refreshing singing quality which Baiano exploits in his thoughtful and sensitive playing, adding appoggiaturas most expressively and stylishly ornamenting repeats. He even manages to give a sense of line to the *Tombeau*, where his rhythm is not quite so free as the others'. Despite my reservations about the 'unmeasured' style, it was Baiano's recording that I wanted to return to after something of a surfeit of Froberger, and that I will listen to with pleasure in future.

Richard Maunder

Alessandro Poglietti
II Rossignolo:
Oeuvres pour clavecin
 Jörg-Andreas Bötticher
 (harpsichord)
 Harmonia Mundi HMC 905242

Poglietti's origins are obscure, but he was appointed Court Organist by Emperor Leopold I in 1661 and remained in Vienna until he lost his life during the Turkish siege in 1683. He could be characterised as the harpsichord equivalent of Biber, with a similarly rich and diverse imagination, encompassing everything from programme music to the French suite and the Italian canzona and ricercare, and whose music is as subtly written for the harpsichord as anything from the 17th century.

Bötticher's recital, despite its title, includes several other works such as the *Toccatina sopra la Ribellione di Ungheria*, graphically describing the arrest, trial and execution of the Hungarian rebels in 1671, besides the enormous *Rossignolo* cycle, written in 1677 in celebration of the marriage of Leopold I to Eleonora of Pfalz-Neuberg. This work,

lasting over 50 minutes in performance, comprises an Italian toccata and canzona, a French suite complete with several *Doubles*, a set of twenty variations (one for each year of the new Empress' age) on a German air, three long fugues of increasing complexity, an *Aria bizzarra del Rossignolo*, and a final programmatic *Imitation del medesimo Uccello* ['imitation of the bird itself']. The variations have sometimes been compared to Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, but Poglietti is less concerned with abstract counterpoint than with genre pieces portraying various parts of the Imperial couple's dominions.

Poglietti himself would have played his music on a single manual harpsichord with just two 8' ranks and the idiosyncratic Viennese short octave arrangement (see my article in the June 1998 *Harpsichord & Fortepiano*). Since, regrettably, no copies of such instruments are currently available, Bötticher sensibly opts for two Italian-style harpsichords, whose sound is probably not too different from that of the similarly short-scaled Viennese instruments. Impossible-looking bass stretches characteristic of the Viennese short octave are plausibly faked by using pull-down pedals for the low notes. One might quibble at the occasional use of as 4' register in the *Rossignolo* cycle, but the instrument (by Gianfranco Facchini) has a beautiful singing tone that suits Poglietti's tuneful music well, and a very good balance between treble and bass. Bötticher's playing is excellent throughout: he negotiates the formidable technical difficulties with aplomb, and the various different styles are well characterised. I particularly enjoyed the exciting sound of some of the *Rossignolo* variations (in which the 'wrong' notes are Poglietti's, not Bötticher's!), and laughed out loud at others, especially the comic mincing Frenchman of Variation 15 and the old crones' barber-shop cadence at the end of Variation 13. Above all, Bötticher understands the nature of period rubato, which allows small-scale freedoms such as

unequal short notes while preserving the basic meter. It is most refreshing to hear this done convincingly, and it is a welcome antidote to the all-too-prevalent continuously varying tempo of modern-style rubato.

I thoroughly recommend this disc, which makes a very good case for the reinstatement of an unjustly neglected master.

Richard Maunder

A Bach Recital

Victor Mio (harpsichord)
 VMR Enterprises, Canada. VMR 299

This Bach recital consists of the following works — 12 Little Preludes, BWV 924-941 *passim*, two Inventions, two preludes and fugues from book 2 of the '48', the first Partita in Bb, the Italian Concerto, and the Concerto in g minor, BWV 975, based on Vivaldi's violin concerto Op.4 no.6. The instrument used is by David Jensen, and is based on an instrument by Blanchet of 1765.

It is unfortunate that many listeners may find these performances rather over-emphatic and heavy in their effect, and certain pieces here do demand a lighter and less fierce presentation. The faster movements tend to fare much better than the slower ones, as may be clearly observed in the performance of the Italian Concerto, where the outer movements are vigorous and strong, while the slow movement suffers from a too detached bass line which seems out of character with the music and unhelpful to the presentation of the elaborate melodic line. The Sarabande in the Bb Partita is another delicate movement of tender effect, which is missing here, and the two gigue movements in the work, the *Corrente* (sic) and *Gigue*, tend to sound rather too spiky. Tempi are, on the whole, agreeable, although the opening movement of the Partita seems to be far too slow.

Gwilym Beechey

Fandango: Scarlatti in Iberia

Sophie Yates, harpsichord

Chandos (Chaconne) CHAN 0635

In this crisply-played collection, four sonatas by Scarlatti are framed within their 18th century Iberian context in order to emphasise the diversity of Spanish keyboard music which infused Scarlatti's adopted musical nationality. It is an interesting reference to the works of the Italian master's contemporaries, not only those of prominence such as the sonatas of Carlos Seixas, but also the music of lesser neglected composers such as Albero y Añños in which we glimpse Scarlatti's influence. I found the two sonatas by Albero particularly charming, and the *Sonata No.3 in g minor* (track 12) is one of the highlights of this recording, bewitching in its use of dissonance against the sultry swing of slow Spanish dance rhythms. The remarkable *Fandango* by Antonio Soler is the apogee expression of the fandango craze which swept 18th century Spain. The improvisational nature of this work with its tantalising dangling phrases and melodic and harmonic non sequiturs is emphasised by the spaciousness of Sophie Yates' approach: an honest, unadorned performance. Despite the length and weight of the *Fandango*, it came as a surprise to discover that the programme contains none of Soler's sonatas, without which I feel that no anthology of Spanish harpsichord music can be complete. For it is only in the sonatas where we hear the real Soler (both in relation to Scarlatti his mentor and as a law unto himself), and the true significance of his important contribution to the musical world being here portrayed. The other disappointment is the inclusion of the *Sonata K.461* in C Major (5): surely one of Scarlatti's dullest compositions! Its contrasting g minor section is at least a curiously dark and sonorous relief from the colourless scale passages of the main body of the sonata - though this is punctuated by some monotonous chord-spreading.

The expansive *Sonata K.263 in e minor* (9) is a more welcome choice,

and Sophie Yates' straightforward, no-nonsense approach here produces a beautifully-paced performance which allows the sonata's natural rhythmic strength to govern, yet not too strictly that the pulse doesn't also relax and stretch. In contrast however, the performance of the *Sonata in D Major K.492* (14) by Scarlatti is afflicted by bouts of rubato which have a kind of Romantic artificiality about them; the resulting rhythmic lurching unhinges the in-built swing which characterises the 6/8 writing in this piece. A few pointedly deliberate moments too in Scarlatti's *Sonata in D Major K. 119* (1) are slightly at odds with an otherwise stirring and infectiously spirited dash in this, one of Scarlatti's most exuberant evocations of Spanish folk idioms coloured by some of his most striking dissonances.

The sonatas of the Portuguese composer José António Carlos de Seixas, greatly admired by Scarlatti, point forward to the classical style and reflect relatively little of Scarlatti's compositional influence. It is in Seixas' sonatas of more than one movement where his wonderfully varied and inventive palette of keyboard colour blends the language of his Spanish keyboard heritage with the accents of the rococo style. The Italian harpsichord (Guido Bizzi after Giusti) illuminates this musical landscape brightly in *Sonata V in d minor* (2 & 3) and also in the brilliant single-movement sonatas on this disc, but most arrestingly in the sparkling *Sonata IV in c minor* (4).

The pungent clarity of the harpsichord is a performer's dream for this repertoire. This is a terrific instrument with a fresh and penetrating bass sound, although at times the prominence of the bass eclipses the higher treble notes (as heard for example in the *Fandango*): not I think a problem of instrument but perhaps one of acoustic.

Pamela Nash

A Garden of Delights.*Beautiful Songs and Music from Georgian England.*

The Windsor Box and Fir Company River Production Ltd & English Heritage. EHCD04

This disc includes songs by the two Arnes, Thomas and Michael, Handel and Shield, and instrumental works by J.C. Bach, C.F. Abel, Haydn and Dussek. The pleasure gardens at Vauxhall, Ranelagh and Marylebone were the favourite haunts of many Londoners in the 18th century, and as strong a tourist attraction for visitors from around the country and abroad as the Dome in London is today. A Swedish visitor in 1748 (quoted in the booklet with the CD) commented that the Vauxhall Gardens were "full of lanes, planted with Lime and Elm, where people can walk about. At one place is a high special bandstand, built with a roof over it, and benches on which the musicians sit. When they have played for some time, there appear singers, who also sing from the bandstand, accompanied now and again by instruments."

The short songs on this CD include two of Thomas Arne's very popular Shakespeare settings, and the vocal items are contrasted with longer instrumental works. All these are light and gentle on the whole, and fall very easily on the ear. There is a very melodic Haydn trio, dating from the 1790s, and involving very attractive melodic lines for a solo flute. From this it may be seen as a disappointment that Haydn left no flute concertos in his output!

Abel's e minor sonata for bass viol and continuo is another attractive work which shows that his solo sonatas deserve to be better known. Abel was one of the last well-known and admired players on the gamba and bass viol. He came to London from Leipzig in 1759, and spent the remainder of his busy life mostly in the company of J.C. Bach, promoting and presenting concerts in the Hanover Square Rooms. His elegant symphonies and chamber music became very popular in England in the 1760s and 1770s, and

some of the former influenced Mozart as a child (his symphony in Eb, Op 7 no 6 was copied by Mozart, and has been known as K18 for some time).

J.C. Bach's variations on the National Anthem for flute and harpsichord is a very entertaining work, as were the songs of the 4th Earl of Abingdon, with their topical allusions, both political and individual. The Earl was a minor composer and a patron of musical enterprise whose circle of friends included Abel and J.C. Bach, and later, in the 1790s, Haydn. Melodically his songs have clear attractions, even if their rhythms remain a little on the straightforward side in their lack of range and adventure.

Dussek's two-movement sonatina for flute and piano (the latter played on the harpsichord here) is a Haydn-esque work, and typical of the cheerful chamber music that was often heard in London in the 1790s at the gardens and concert rooms. The immediate appeal of such works lay, amongst other things, in the lack of a slow movement; here there is an *allegro* movement followed by a *Rondo cum Minuet* — all very easy on the ear, and with plenty for the keyboard to play. The format of the accompanied sonata still lingered on through the 1790s, i.e. a work for keyboard with an 'accompanying' instrument, usually a violin or flute.

This is a delightful collection of music from the period of about 1730 to 1800, and it is all very pleasantly presented on this CD in elegant and tasteful performances. Much of it is unfamiliar today, and listeners will find much new repertoire to enjoy from this active and lively period of musical production in England. The singers and players of The Windsor Box and Fir Company here are Jenny Thomas, Michael Sanderson (tenor and violin), Ian Gammie and Katherine May. English Heritage have produced a fine illustrated leaflet to accompany this fascinating CD.

Gwilym Beechey

John Field
Piano Music Volume 1 Nocturnes and Sonatas
Benjamin Frith (modern piano)
Naxos 8 550761

This disc consists of John Field's first nine Nocturnes and his first two solo piano sonatas, in Eb and A Op 1, nos 1 and 2.

The first nocturnes were written in Russia in 1812, although the second one was written earlier under the title *Romance*. No. 5 was later used as a song, No. 6 (1817) became the slow movement of the composer's sixth piano concerto (1819), while No. 8 (1816) was adapted from a divertissement for piano quartet (1811). All these nocturnes have great appeal and charm, and it is a pity that they are not found more frequently in recital programmes. They show a great variety of style and tempo, and their pianistic idiom, in terms of melody and elaboration, looks forward clearly to the works of Schumann, Chopin and Liszt, amongst others. Liszt's affection for John Field is seen in his edition of the Nocturnes as well as his own pieces of the same title.

The two sonatas here are both in two movements, and were published in London in 1801 when Field was nineteen. They were dedicated to Clementi, whose influence can be clearly appreciated in their style and layout. The beneficial inspiration of Clementi on Field's work is seen especially in the second sonata, in A major, where both movements are marked *Allegro vivace*.

Field always seems to have been an underrated musician, even if his invention of the nocturne as a single-movement piano piece has often been acknowledged. He is an important and distinguished composer for the piano in the first thirty years or so of the 19th century, quite apart from the vast influence he exerted on his younger contemporaries and successors in all parts of Europe. As with Chopin, all his surviving music involves the piano.

Benjamin Frith plays Field's music

very well and this CD should win many new admirers for these lovely pieces. Expression and colour are often more in evidence than virtuosity, and some of the pieces are easy rather than hard. The tempi here are well chosen and bring out many attractions of the music. One may wonder whether some of Field's 'operatic' style of melodic composition influenced Bellini at all, and to what extent Field's melodies were influenced by opera and operatic performance?

Gwilym Beechey

Romantic piano

Here are some short notices on recent discs of 19th century piano music. Paul Komen plays **Beethoven's Sonatas (Vol. IV)** (GLOBE GLO 5184) nos. 24 to 27. I have to say I found his readings mundane and unexceptional. He performs on a Salvatore la Grassa from about 1815 but gives little impression that he has more than a cursory understanding of the instrument: as a result, balance between the hands is poor and the tone produced often harsh. More interesting was the album of **Works for Mandolin and Fortepiano** (GLOBE GLO 5187) by Beethoven and his contemporaries Hummel and the little-known Vincent Neuling. This performance of a neglected repertoire is delightfully played by Richard Walz on the mandolin and Viviana Sofronitzki on a Walter copy by Paul McNulty.

From Teldec comes a double disc of **Schubert: The Late Piano Sonatas D958-960** (TELDEC Das Alte Werk 0630 13143 2) with Andreas Staier on a Johann Fritz Viennese fortepiano. Our expectations of how this performer will tackle these superb masterpieces is, of course, high. Staier does not disappoint: here is someone who understands the fortepiano — listen to the ethereal *una corda* passages; the genuine pianissimo playing which allows forte to be a contrast without overtaxing the instrument; a beautiful range of colour; and a successful voicing of texture,

avoiding the pitfalls of imbalance between the registers so noticeable on Komen's recital. In a way, however, it is a pity that there are so few rival fortepianists to match Staier, as his interpretative view of these sonatas is rather conservative both in its fidelity to the text (apart from an occasional arpeggiation) and to the Austro-German weight that makes all these pieces rather serious, and even gloomy at times: I must admit I prefer the more recent (even if disputed) portrait of Schubert as the archetype of a witty gay man. Needless to say Staier makes more sense of the c minor sonata than the Bb one.

Daniel Paul Horn lies somewhere between Staier and Komen in his recital of fantasy pieces by Mendelssohn and Schubert entitled *Wanderings* (Titanic Ti 236). An annoying temporal reticence at the end of phrases is particularly irritating — this is not so noticeable in the Mendelssohn works, which, despite having the word 'Fantasy' in the title ('in # minor', Op 28; 'on an Irish song', Op 15; 'Three Fantasies or Caprices', Op 16), are less open to this type of overemphatic rubato than Schubert. That is not to say that there are not beautiful moments in the Schubert as well (Fantasies D 2e; D 605a; D 760) — although the last fugal section of the *Wanderer Fantasy* is rather po-faced: surely Schubert's cracking a joke here? Nevertheless this whole CD is thought-provoking in its examination of the fantasy/wandering:sonata/stability dichotomy, a rare example of imaginative programming in this medium.

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Two discs from the Opus III Exploration of Chopin can only receive the highest recommendation. *Chopin At Home: evening around an 1831 Pleyel* (OPUS III OPS 2010) is basically a recital of some of his best-known works by pianist Janusz Olejniczak, joined by the Ensemble Mosaique for the *larghetto* from the second piano concerto. The revelation of hearing this music on Chopin's own Erard (and, for once, the CD booklet does not exaggerate) makes this disc much more than a collection of lollipops. My only concern is the rubato used here. Even better is the disc *Warsaw 1830: The landmark concert* (OPUSIII OPS 2008) which recreates an early important concert given by the composer on 17 March 1830. We have been crying out for a disc like this for ages — an equivalent for the 19th century to all those renaissance and baroque liturgical reconstructions. The performances are a treat with Olejniczak joined by soprano Olga Pasiechnyuk and Das Neue Orchester under Christoph Spering. The opportunity to hear

Chopin's Op 21 concerto in the context of his *Fantasia* Op 13, overtures by Kurpinski and Elsner with *La Bionda* by Paer, is unmissable — this is a must-buy.

No apologies for ending this review with a disc of *Busoni Piano Music* performed on the modern piano by Claudio Tanski (MDG Gold MDG 312 0436 2). Like Chopin, Liszt, Debussy, Bartok and Cage, Busoni, outside of the Austro-German tradition, was able to create a new approach to the instrument — even in the Bach transcriptions that open this recital. The other pieces (Four Elegies, his second sonatina and a toccata) add up to an excellent introduction to this fascinating composer, who stands at the crossroads of both modernism and postmodernism. How long will we have to wait to hear Busoni on an early 20th-century instrument? My guess is, that when we do, it will be as revealing as Chopin on the Erard.

P.H.

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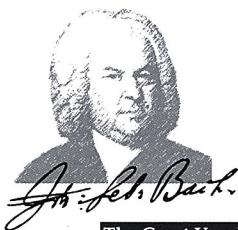
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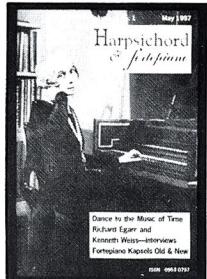
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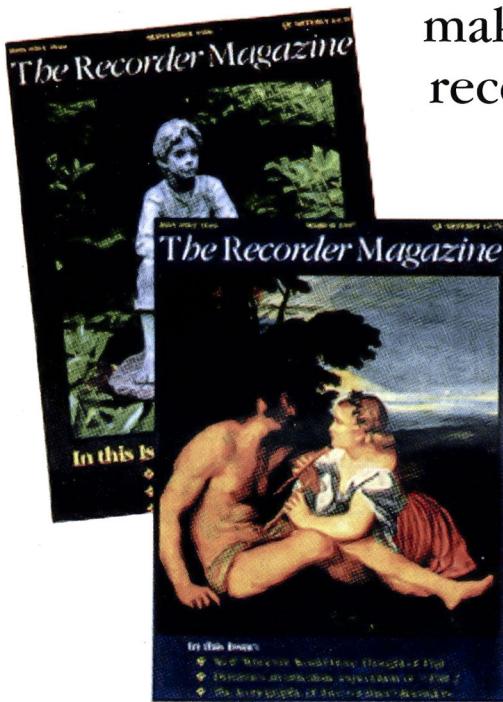
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