Harpsichord & fortepiano

Vol. 9, No. 2 Summer, 2001

Musical Instrument Research Catalog
(MIRCat)

BOOK REVIEWS

Royal College of Music, Museum of Instruments. Catalogue Part II: Keyboard Instruments, edited by Elizabeth Wells, 2000. A4 format, 144 pages of text with copious photographs; obtainable from the Royal College of Music, price £25 plus £3 inland p&p.

Whenever a new catalogue appears we should be grateful. Disseminating information is surely one of the main functions of a public or quasi-public museum, even if many administrators appear to lose sight of this. Some of the world's biggest keyboard collections in the USA and Germany seem to be making no progress whatever towards a publication of this kind. (Some do not even have a reliable checklist of their holdings.) So let us welcome this publication by the RCM.

It has been compiled or edited by the long-time curator, Elizabeth Wells, drawing on the expert contributions of John Budgen, Chris Nobbs, Jenny Nex, Lance Whitehead, and William Debenham — who were actively involved in the project — and other experts like Grant O'Brien, Sabine Klaus, and the late John Barnes, whose observations and notes the college has on file.

This collection goes back a long way – over a hundred years in fact since the first donations were made, shortly after the great International Inventions Exhibition in 1885. So far as keyboard instruments are concerned the major benefactor was Sir George Donaldson, who gave several instruments in 1894 when the present college building was opened in Kensington, immediately behind the Royal Albert Hall. His gifts include the c1480 clavicytherium (thought to be the oldest surviving keyboard instrument in the world), a Venetian virginal dated 1593 by Celestini, and two early Italian harpsichords. A magnificent 1773 harpsichord by Kirckman was given by former curator Alfred J Hipkins, author of the first significant history of the pianoforte: other gifts were presented either directly by him or by his wife Edith after his death. Former students have added to the collection with smaller instruments. Perhaps it is significant that, after this buoyant start, the college had to make purchases in order to acquire an antique grand piano, and this did not happen until quite recently. They bought their 1799 Broadwood grand in 1972, and subsequently had it restored (1977) in the Adlam Burnett workshops at Finchcocks. Their Viennese grand, by Jacob Bertsche, 1821, was purchased as a playing instrument in 1991. So it seems that, despite having had Hipkins for a curator, the college's interest in early or classical period pianos was rather slow to develop.

So what can we say about the catalogue? Who is it written for; what is its function; and how well does it answer its purpose? After reading it through pretty thoroughly my conclusion is that it is chiefly written for specialist instrument buffs – collectors, instrument makers, and academically motivated specialists. Each instrument is described under six main headings: the inscriptions, details of the case construction, the keyboard itself, the string activating mechanism, the string scaling and strike points, and the decoration. Intelligently these bare descriptions are then followed by a "History of earlier states and restorations" enabling the reader to better appreciate some of the changes that an instrument may have undergone before it reached the museum – or even afterwards. In many instances this is vital. A surprising number of these 'historic' instruments have had major alterations and do not represent what they might have been supposed to represent. Leaving aside the organs and regals (every one of which has been significantly rebuilt), the altered or adulterated specimens range from the patently faked 'octave spinet', probably bought from the Florentine fraudster Franciolini, to the harpsichord by Trasuntino that has undergone multiple transformations since it left the maker's workshop in 1531. It currently possesses the usual two 8′ choirs strung in brass, but it was originally disposed 1 x 8′, 1 x 4′, with a long scale suggesting that it had iron strings. The original c^2 string length on the 8′ choir is estimated to have been 356mm. It seems that even the c1480 clavicytherium is not entirely unmodified. Nicholas Meeus observed some years ago that the lowest key, apparently E, once had a cutout on the right which was blocked in and covered by a replacement touch plate. So, between E and F there was once an 'accidental' or sharp key. Most likely the E and E# keys could be tuned as required for a specific piece. The note F# was only inserted when the E# was removed (at an unknown date), so the number of notes on the keyboard was unchanged. Other instruments of the harpsichord family comprise a much-altered Italian harpsichord with a suggested origin c1610, a Weber harpsichord from Dublin c1775 with 2 x 8′, whose machine stop and swell were added afterwards, and four English bentside spinets.

Clavichords are poorly represented. There are only two in the collection. One of these is the sixth made by Dolmetsch in the 1890s when he was still following historic models. The other is a five-octave example apparently made by Johann Bohak in Vienna in 1794. According to the documents presented with this instrument, it belonged to Joseph Haydn, and there is an attested chain of ownership apparently proving this, provided that the initial link – where it was allegedly given by Haydn to one Demetrius Lichtental, Court Chancellor at Esterhaza – can be trusted. I think it would be wise to keep an open mind on this point. The earliest deposition on the matter dates from 1831 when Lichtental's son wanted to sell the clavichord with a provenance. At that time he reported Haydn's words to his father as follows: "Here I make you a present of this instrument for your lad [*Ihren Buben* – then three years old] – in case he wants to learn on it when he's older. I have composed the greater part of my 'Creation' on it." A Haydn relic or not, John Barnes' detailed report (not quoted directly in the catalogue) makes it clear that there have been numerous alterations including a replacement bridge, new tangents, the insertion of a heavy tangent rail and alterations to the case and lid. In England in the early 20th century it also acquired the present cabriole stand, and it was again restored, this time by Broadwoods. But despite all this interference it is an interesting specimen – particularly as Viennese clavichords tend to be ignored by musicologists.

The two grand pianos have already been mentioned, each bought with a view to performance. In addition there are two very ordinary 19th-century English square pianos and a tall cabinet piano with a sticker action (c1821) – and another instrument that needs further examination. This is the anonymous German [?] square which has obtained a completely specious

significance since it was used to illustrate 'Prellmechanik' in the 1980s *New Grove Dictionary* – and spin-off publications such as 'The Piano'. This was a most unfortunate choice for two reasons: first, because the action is not typical in any sense, quite the reverse, and second, because the date given for the instrument in *New Grove*, c1770, is misleading. The reason for selecting this instrument was only the pure chance of its being familiar to the compilers of the *New Grove* entries, which in turn depended on an almost arbitrary chain of ownership and bequest. Anyone who had a good general acquaintance with *Prellmechanik* square pianos would never have chosen this one to represent them. To an experienced eye, one glance at the keyboard and specification is quite enough to sound warning bells regarding the purported date. So it is with mixed feelings that I now see that the museum has acknowledged the error – though half-heartedly. I quote: "This instrument has at various times been given an origin between the 1760s and the 1790s though the consensus now tends to the later date." I suggest that, despite its seemingly primitive hammer mechanism, the style of the keys and their front guidance system indicate 1790-95, when Viennese makers such as Anton Walter went over to this style, as the most likely date that should be ascribed to it, and that no earlier date should be suggested without supporting evidence. Unhappily, the recently published millenium edition of *New Grove* has retained this action drawing and the caption without changing the date. Whether it is actually of German manufacture is also of some interest. It was bought by a Mrs Lehmann in Italy at the end of the 19th century, and presented by her to Hipkins in 1903. Already it had been much modified and the likelihood is that it was comprehensively rebuilt again in England. Strangely there are only two reported examples with the same action, one in Hungary and one in Munich, so it was not a good choice to illustrate in *New Grove* as a representative example. I wonder if the maker might have lived much farther east that has been so far suggested?

Such questions, you may think, are of limited interest to anyone not directly involved in the arcane world of historical instruments. And I would agree. So this makes me return to examine the basic premise of this publication and similar catalogues. Who is being addressed, and whom does it serve? Obviously there is a great deal of labour needed to produce a carefully structured and comprehensively illustrated book of this kind, but in planning its publication does the college and its museum seek to inform and interest a new generation of practical musicians? Or is it sufficient to address only a more narrowly interested readership?

For me, and no doubt for others who need authoritative details on dimensions, dispositions and the varied history of specific instruments, data of the kind presented here can be very useful. But I cannot help observing that the average keyboard player who might be tempted to invest £25 in this book will not get much pleasure or instruction from their investment. I notice in particular that despite the close association between this collection and a conservatory training new musicians, the catalogue makes no attempt to give information about the playing characteristics of these antique instruments. In the copious data about the pianos there is nothing to tell us about the depth of movement in the keys, or the weight of the touch, or any indication of their facility of repetition. Though the catalogue remarks on the interpolation of a 'tangent rail' in the Bohak clavichord, only experts will understand the consequences for the touch unless it is explained. Plenty of facts and figures are given about the size and width of the keys, but there is no mention of the height of the sharps, which is often one of the best indicators of the kind of technique that early performers may have used.

Then there is the matter of context. I do question the utility of bare mechanical descriptions of instruments. Is any musical instrument simply a mechanical structure, and can we understand anything about its significance without considering the social and cultural environment in which it was created? Certainly in this catalogue there is only the most perfunctory attempt to contextualise. Of the Bertsche fortepiano for example we read: "...an excellent and representative example of the Viennese grand piano of the first quarter of the nineteenth century." (Why "excellent"?) It is said to have a "plain but handsome Biedermeier case", but what this means, or why Parisian or London pianos are decorated in a different way is not explained. Of the pedals (it has five) there is only the basic nomination, whereas – I would suggest – there is a desperate need for such information to be related to performance practices in the Viennese context, and the sources of information that might have influenced or informed the taste of the Viennese bourgeoisie for whom such pianos were made, for example Louis Adam's treatise of 1804. Connections between this catalogue and a wider literature on this subject – for example David Rowland's book on pianoforte pedalling – might connect up some of the erudition shown by the compilers and make sense of the data for a wider audience.

Michael Cole

Early Keyboard Instruments: A Practical Guide by David Rowland, Cambridge Handbooks to the Historical Performance of Music, Cambridge University Press, 2001

This small handbook is a general survey of the range of questions which performers on historic keyboard instruments need to address. What music to play? What types of editions to use, and how to use them? What type of instrument to choose? Their tunings? The use of their attachments, e.g. harpsichord registration and piano pedals? Appropriate finger technique, fingering and articulation? What is the role of improvisation? How and when are ornaments added? How is *tempo rubato* to be interpreted? What do we need to consider when playing continuo? In addition, there are a few 'case studies' which look at particular problems in six different works (by Louis Couperin, Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin — a measure of how 'early music' has become focussed on the later, great-names part of the repertoire). The comments and advice given by Rowland on all of these subjects are entirely commonsense and trustworthy.

The volume, however, is subtitled 'A Practical Guide', and I fail to see how it can be employed in a practical way at all. In such a short text (120pp excluding footnotes) Rowland is only able to raise the questions and cannot begin to answer them, at least not in a way that would be helpful to a student of early keyboard practice. Indeed, the brief coverage of some of

the issues is bound to confuse those not already familiar with them. The volume might perhaps be best regarded as an annotated bibliography, with readers doing well to follow up the end-note references which Rowland supplies.

PH

François Couperin:
L'Art de toucher le clavecin, 1717; Règles pour l'accompagnement with introduction by Philippe Lescat and Jean Saint-Arroman, Éditions J.M. Fuzeau No 5227, Courlay 1996

This is a most welcome facsimile reprint of Couperin's famous tutor, first published in 1716 and revised the following year (it is the 1717 edition that is reproduced here, but the 1716 title page, dedication and preface are also included). It's not a systematic 'method' in the modern sense, being aimed more at the advanced player and the teacher — and consequently it gives exactly the sort of information and advice the modern student of historical performance practice really needs. It provides an essential link between Couperin's books of *Pièces de Clavecin*, precisely notated as they may seem, and what the composer regards as good performance. As he says, *'Comme il y a une grande distance de la Grammaire, à la Déclamation; il y en a aussi une infinie entre la Tablature, et la façon de bien-joüer'*.

Everything is aimed at clarity and precision, and above all expression, on what Couperin himself admits is by its nature an inexpressive instrument. Even one's posture is important: he describes exactly how to sit at the instrument, and recommends a mirror on the music stand to correct *'des grimaces du visage'*. Time and again he stresses the importance of correct fingering, not so much for the sake of technical fluency but as a means of achieving exactly the phrasing and articulation he has in mind, saying that he can tell the difference between one fingering and another by ear alone.
He gives a number of examples from his first two books of *Pièces*, with full fingerings and explanations as necessary. There are also eight preludes suitable as introductions to his published suites (why are they so rarely played?), again with fingering and with some useful *'Observations'* on the appropriate rhythmic freedom (except in those preludes marked *mesuré*).

Couperin obviously has precise ideas about how his music should be played, and has done his utmost to explain everything that can't be indicated by the notation alone. The book will repay very careful study: read, mark and inwardly digest everything the composer says!

By contrast, the editorial introduction, like some others in this series, is best left unread. The chronological summary of contemporary events will as usual infuriate anyone but the most nationalistic Frenchman, and there are some rather questionable statements in the remarks about 'Couperin's fingering' (especially about the use of the thumb on accidentals).

Two manuscript copies of Couperin's brief *'Règles pour l'accompagnement'* are included as a supplement, one of them in the hand of the musical lexicographer de Brossard. It's of some interest, but does little more than explain figured bass notation.

Richard Maunder

Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician by Christoph Wolff, Oxford University Press, 2000

It hardly needs saying that a lifetime's study has given Christoph Wolff the preparation to write what will undoubtedly be, now and for some time to come, the standard biography of Bach. Compiled to the highest standards of scholarship, and presented in a clear, straightforward style, the result is an essential handbook for all those concerned with Bach study or performance. The book follows Bach's life chronologically and then finishes with over a hundred pages of endnotes (to hope for the more manageable footnotes is a lost cause these days, I suppose), musical examples (which would also have been more useful interleaved with the text), appendices, a bibliography and three indexes. The 600 pages of this work have been remarkably well edited in the final stages, if one overlooks some jarring colloquialisms ("lousy"; "the Hamburg scene"; etc.) and one misprint (p. 447 'Example 12.3' should read '12.2'). If the rest of this review seems more critical, this should not detract from the just and meticulous handling of so much primary and secondary evidence which forms the backbone of this volume.

The first point which needs making is that this is a biography rather than a life-and-works study. With Bach, I feel, this poses a problem: his life was not particularly eventful, and the story of it lacks narrative tension, to say the least. It is, nevertheless, important for what it tells us about Bach's development as a composer. But to ignore the music itself, as Wolff does here (apart from a few brief cursory analyses), seems to me to miss the point; for instance, when we ask a question such as 'What was Bach doing in Leipzig in the 1720s?' the answer must be, 'mainly writing cantatas'. Wolff has promised a companion volume on Bach's music, which will be eagerly awaited, although it will undoubtedly result in there being a great deal of duplication of information throughout both volumes. It is a pity that the publishers did not spur Wolff on to greater ambition. When Wolff does venture to discuss Bach's music the results are very disappointing, consisting mainly of descriptive passages, such as: "the introduction ...sounds like the sweetest, most beautiful and melodious angels' consort". This kind of thing doesn't get us very far. Another serious weakness is the lack of context against which to place Bach's music. We still know relatively little about the music of his contemporaries and immediate forebears, and until they are better understood we will have no way of judging Bach's achievement from a more informed perspective. How, for example, did the 18 cantatas by Johann Ludwig Bach, performed by Johann Sebastian in 1726, compare with his own?

As a result of the volume's biographical approach, it does contain a good deal of background information about the institutions for whom the composer worked. The details are often fascinating, and there is much here for performers to think about when considering the original conditions for which Bach's music was composed or performed. There is, however, a fair amount of superfluous local history and biography, and far too much repetition of facts and stories from one chapter to another.

The book's subtitle, 'The learned musician', indicates Wolff's claim that Bach was not just a provincial musical genius, but also a thinker fully aware of the intellectual currents of his time. Bach has always had a reputation for being 'too clever by half' and for producing 'mathematical' music, so no doubt Wolff's view will confirm the suspicions of those (mainly Anglo-

Saxon: in Britain the *Classic FM* crowd) music-lovers who would prefer music to be solely concerned with the emotional rather than the reasoning side of the mind. I think Wolff rather overstates his case: the portrait which emerges from the book, in spite of the author's polemics, is that of an original musical genius, totally absorbed with the nitty-gritty of musical composition and performance rather than speculation about the nature of music itself.

Wolff compares Bach with Newton, saying that Bach's 'search for truth' was influenced by the Scientific Revolution (how William Blake would have scorned this idea!). Wolff does not tell us what the 'search for truth' is in musical terms, and if he means by it Bach's exhaustive working-out of different forms, he needs to go further and demonstrate that what Bach was doing was different and more 'rational' than the activities of his contemporaries. In the field of the fugue, Bach's intellectual enquiry has a distinctly old-fashioned, idiosyncratic feel about it: surely more to do with being at the periphery rather than at the centre of current ideas. If any musical genre of the time sought to connect with current issues, it was opera — the one form Bach did not touch.

On p.310 we read:

> [Bach] moved among the distinguished scholars of the academic community.... Their daily work and the level and content of their intellectual discourse, ranging from conservative theological and philosophical orthodoxy to progressive rationalism, influenced his own thinking. And the products of their scholarship provided the immediate context for his own musical products. While not directly comparable in terms of actual content (after all, we don't even know which books by his Leipzig colleagues Bach read), they were related in terms of their function as educational, enlightening, and uplifting contributions to the intellectual environment at large.

The give-away is in the parentheses. According to Wolff, Bach "undertook his own empirical and open-ended inquiry into the secrets and principles of music in order to offer his own resounding explanations and reverberating demonstrations"(p.311). This is indeed speculation and I do not believe the author has provided any real evidence that Bach was particularly influenced by academic circles in Leipzig, except in a superficial sense, which is not the same as claiming that the composer was a member of the intelligentsia. For example, on p.316 Wolff writes that the choice of Bach as a composer of music for an official university reception is "evidence of the unequivocal preference for Bach on the part of the academic leadership", as if that choice was made on the basis of Bach's ability to discuss philosophy and theology, rather than his being simply the best musician in town! To bolster his argument Wolff lists "professional colleagues and university students" who had contact with Bach: but when these figures, such as Johann Matthias Gesner, mention Bach it is to praise him for his musicianship rather than for his skills in intellectual discourse. It does not seem to cross Wolff's mind that intellectuals can admire musicians for their musical faculties alone. The long hours needed to be given over in pursuit of musical rehearsal and composition (especially on the scale of Bach's achievement in these fields) probably did not really allow a great deal of time for other than a cursory intellectual extramusical enquiry. No doubt Bach picked up something of fashionable ideas at Leipzig, but how they changed his music has yet to be demonstrated.

In fact, what we know of Bach's character is that, like a number of other gifted musicians, he was arrogant and difficult to work with. One can feel sorry for the Leipzig councillors who were, after all, just trying to do their jobs and not really wanting a headstrong and ambitious — albeit talented — composer to run their music. Thankfully Wolff does not indulge in Freudian or other farfetched interpretations of Bach's personality; the nearest he gets is on p.400, where he asks whether Bach's son Bernhard's matriculation as a law student was "an attempt on the part of a gifted young man struggling with obligation and inclination, intimidated son of a powerful father and uncertain of his own place in life, to turn things around". It would be quite interesting to view the Bach family in the light of Frank Sulloway's recent study of family dynamics, *Born to Rebel*. Although Bach does seem to have had a broad sense of humour (at least Wolff finds it funny; I remain unconvinced), and was generally kind and solicitous for his family, the question of whether the gift of a singing-bird and carnations for Anna Magdalena was inspired by affection, or by duty — along the lines of the stereotype businessman who asks his secretary to send roses to his wife on her birthday — is a moot point.

Wolff's book is unlikely to appeal to the general music-lover, and, to be honest, there is no reason why it should. Less ambitious is a short volume (about 100 pages) by Davitt Moroney, **Bach: an extraordinary life** (ABRSM, 2000), which briefly and drily deals with the main events in the composer's life with cobbled-together anecdotes on Bach's eating and drinking habits etc. The problem was that Bach did not have an extraordinary life, and reading about it is as interesting as watching a composer compose without seeing or hearing the result. But the music: now that's a different story.

PH

Chopin: The Piano Concertos by John Rink, Cambridge Music Handbooks, Cambridge University Press, 1997

Cambridge Music Handbooks focus on one or two works by individual composers in about 100 pages. The best of these extended essays can throw a revealing light on well-known works, suggesting to the reader new ways of appreciating the works under consideration. John Rink's volume on the Chopin piano concertos succinctly lays out the challenge of dealing with these works, which are popular with the general public, but which have received a generally bad press from the academic community:

> ...the concertos have typically been regarded...as...inferior to his mature masterpieces. Nevertheless, when viewed as music to be performed rather than scores to be dissected on paper, they belong to his most successful creations...(p.ix).

Indeed, with Chopin's music, performance is a key issue; Rink quotes the *Kurier polski* (1830): "all his [Chopin's] compositions sound like improvisations...".

It is therefore disappointing that this volume pays little attention to the instruments of the period, especially given the later critical tradition which questions the composer's use of the orchestra. The contemporary *Kurier polski* again offers a differing point of view: "...the orchestral accompaniment ... never distorted or overpowered the principal instrument" (quoted on p. 17). There

is some mention of Erard's double-escapement action and how "Pleyel definitively attached himself to the artist..." (Eigeldinger, quoted on p.15), but these themes are not expanded on in the rest of the book.

The opening chapters deal with the context of the 19th-century concerto, the genesis of the works, and their interpretation. Here the brevity of the handbook format can be frustrating. For instance, take this sentence on p.3:

> In this respect at least, it [Czerny's model of the concerto] accurately reflects the design of most early nineteenth-century virtuoso concertos, which — like many works in the *stile brillante*— thrived on often abrupt alternations between 'poetry' and 'display' (Jim Samson's terms) ... or, more specifically, between 'stable' thematic statements and discursive passagework, in the 'two-phase construction' defined by Józef Chominski....

There is no further explanation of what either Samson or Chominski meant by these terms. Either they are essential to Rink's argument, in which case something more is needed, or else they are inessential and therefore Rink or his editor should have deleted the references. True enough, the Samson writings will be fairly accessible to most readers, but Chominski's is a Polish work translated into German. There seems to be some confusion of purpose: are these volumes intended for a specialist academic audience or for a more general readership? If the latter, the weighty academic paraphernalia used in this volume seems misplaced. I have enjoyed many of the other handbooks in the series, even though my knowledge of the literature surrounding the works under consideration has sometimes been almost non-existent. No doubt Cambridge is attempting to steer a course between the two extremes, but it is an uneasy one, and I remain unconvinced about the usefulness of this particular volume.

That is not to say that Rink does not make some very interesting points in these first chapters. It is just a pity that the argument has to be so severely curtailed, particularly when space is taken up with detailed analyses of editions and recordings which seem out of place here, especially as Rink employs language such as: "...his [Lipatti's] passion overflow[s], tinged by a sense of inner tragedy, the movement's conclusion neither fast nor lightweight but sombre and pensive. The Romance is also beautifully shaped, the reprise in bar 80 like a rediscovery, the cadenza a moment of loss." (p. 41) Indeed!

The main part of the book is taken up with an analysis of Chopin's two concertos, and a final chapter on his 'third' concerto. The analyses require careful and painstaking reading with score in hand. Whether the end justifies the means I am not sure. More basic points about Chopin's compositional technique might have been profitably interleaved with musical examples in the text. In analysis it is often enough to suggest to the reader the direction in which they should tackle their listening, performing or reading of the work, and then discreetly leave them to make the final decisions by themselves. Analysis is very exciting for participants, but very dull if you are passively on the receiving end.

In conclusion, it is almost as if John Rink had been told to write down everything he knew about Chopin's piano concertos, omitting nothing. I think the editors at Cambridge must take the blame for a lack of clear intent. There are articles buried in this book which should be destined for academic journals, and there is a general introduction, and indeed rehabilitation of Chopin's concertos that could have had a more general readership. It is with regret, therefore, that I cannot recommend this work to anyone who is not already a specialist in this period of music. A missed opportunity.

PH

Mental Practice and Imagery for Musicians by Malva Freymouth, Integrated Musician's Press, 1999

This is an American publication by an American violinist who also studied kinesiology and sport psychology, so if the phrase 'Mental Practice' sounds like something one's children would stay about a currently 'wicked' band, it's not surprising, mega-cool in fact! And so it is. The idea of preparation away from the instrument is one I have always encouraged pupils to try, and Malva Freymouth expands this concept with her personal experience of tendonitis giving the book a definite edge. She puts across the urgency of working intelligently, and therefore economically, rather than merely for many, many hours. This small book of barely one hundred pages, in large typeface and with plenty of subheadings, is not difficult to read. I found it salutary to review my own practise-methods again, and indeed to actively imagine both the music and the physical sensations before playing a passage and then to stop and recall what I had just heard and felt before playing it again. It is so easy to fall back into playing too much and thinking with one's fingers! She also gives some hints on how to improve your mental imagery, which is mostly sound advice, even if you have reservations about memories of taste and smell being helpful. The only strong disagreement I have with her is over training the ear to remember A440, something no musician who regularly plays baroque music at differing pitches would want to do. With all such collections of advice, the reader will make his or her own selection, according to what is personally and currently pertinent, but her appendix on relaxation will probably be of use to most, and it certainly won't damage your health!

The book is available from the author at 631 R University Avenue, Boulder CO 80302, with a cheque or money order for $14.95 plus $4 shipping ($5 Europe).

Penelope Cave

MUSIC REVIEWS

Pancrace Royer: Pièces de Clavecin, Premier livre, 1746. Introduction by Philippe Lescat and Jean Saint-Arroman. Éditions J.M. Fuzeau No 5230, Courlay 1996

Joseph-Nicolas-Pancrace Royer (c.1705-1755) was born in Turin, but by 1725 had moved to Paris, where he lived for the rest of his life. He made his reputation chiefly as an opera composer, but was also one of the directors of the Concert Spirituel from 1748, where his enterprising programmes included the latest symphonies by Hasse, Jomelli and Johann Stamitz. His first (and only) book of *Pièces de clavecin*, reproduced here in facsimile, was published in 1746 and was dedicated to 'Mesdames de France' - though Royer makes absolutely no concessions to their presumably amateur status. The twelve separate pieces, some of which are Royer's

own arrangements of his ballet music, are written in an exciting, colourful and flamboyantly virtuoso style, reminiscent of Forqueray, and should certainly be revived as attractive items for solo recitals. 'Le Vertigo' and 'La Marche des Scythes' are particularly impressive, especially when played on a big French two-manual. Most of the pieces are technically demanding, and you need to be able to read fluently from no fewer than seven clefs (the most mentally challenging combination, I find, is French violin for the right hand and soprano for the left, as in most of 'La Zaïde'). But persevere: the music is very rewarding and is great fun to play.

A total of twelve pieces makes for a fairly slim volume, but for good measure it includes facsimile scores of five of the original ballet pieces. There is also a short biography of the composer; a chronology of contemporary events, as seen from an outrageously chauvinist French perspective; and some (rather unhelpful) remarks on ornament signs.

Richard Maunder

J.S. Bach:
Toccatas BWV 910-916 Bärenreiter BA 5235
Keyboard Arrangements of Works by Other Composers I BWV 972-977 BA 5221
Keyboard Arrangements II BWV 978-984 BA 5222
Keybaord Arrangements III BWV 985-987; 592a; 972a; 965; 966; 954 BA 5223
Miscellaneous Works for Piano [sic] **I** BWV 917; 918; 921; 922; 894-896; 903; 903a; & Six little Preludes BWV 933-938 BA 5232
Miscellaneous Works for Piano II BWV 904; 906; 923/951; 951a; 944; 946; 948-950; 952; 959; 961; 967 BA 5233
Miscellaneous Works for Piano III BWV 992; 993; 989; 963; 820; 823; 832; 833; 822; 998 BA 5234
The Art of the Fugue for Harpsichord BWV 1080BA 5207
Concerto No. 1 in d minor for Harpsichord & Strings Piano Reduction BWV 1052 BA 5224a

C.P.E. Bach:
Concerto in d minor for Harpsichord & Strings after J.S. Bach Piano Reduction BA 5231a

This set of Bärenreiter Bach editions presents superb texts from the New Bach Edition of a good deal of the lesser known keyboard works of the composer, including all his keyboard transcriptions of works by other composers. There should be no excuse for Bach recitals to continue to be made up merely of the French suites, the Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue, the Italian Concerto and a few numbers of 'The 48', as they still too often are. The editions are clean, with variant readings presented in small staves, footnotes or appendices. Very little editorial interfence with the sources is evident apart from, curiously, the occasional editorial phrase-mark indicating similarly phrased passages (I doubt very much whether the users of this edition, who will have to look elsewhere for information about performance practice, ornaments, fingering etc., need this kind of help). Earlier and later versions are given for Toccatas BWV 912 and 913; embellished 'performance' versions of Toccata BWV 916; two versions of the Fantasies BWV 917 and 922; two versions of the Prelude BWV 894; and three versions of the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue BWV 903 (all three versions of this last are published separately in BA 5236); and early versions of the Fugues BWV 951a and 944. Some of these versions are highly ornamented and contain useful contemporary fingerings. The prefaces to the editions are succinct and informative.

There is, however, a major caveat: to make sense of the given text and alternative readings one needs access to the Critical Reports, which are published separately. No doubt the publishers would argue that including this information would make these 'performer's editions' prohibitively expensive; on the other hand, not everyone wanting to use these editions will have ready access to a good library. One solution would be for Bärenreiter to post the Critical Reports on the internet, and I hope they will give serious consideration to doing so. It would be a pity to keep such excellent scholarship hidden from all but University academics and their students.

PH

CONCERT REVIEWS

The Music Collection
Wigmore Hall, London
23 July 2000

The Music Collection's Wigmore Hall Recital showed off the group's musicianship and interpretative skills to the full: with Micaela Comberti on violin and Pal Banda on cello, what more could we expect? But the driving force of the group is Susan Alexander-Max, a fortepianist of rare distinction — she approaches the instrument with a dexterity and lightness of touch which brings out its truly distinctive qualities: its ability to articulate clearly; its ability to be expressive; its ability to both command and blend with other instruments in chamber music. In other words, Alexander-Max treats the fortepiano as an instrument in its own right and not, as is still too commonly the case, as a slightly dotty elderly relative of the modern grand. The works performed included a Haydn Trio, Hummel's Op. 12 (see CD reviews) and ended with Schubert's superb Trio D898. It was an unforgettable concert, full of drama on the one hand, and lyric beauty on the other — please make every effort to see this group if you get the chance.

PH

Earthly Delights
South Bank, London
8-10 September 2000

Another of Pickett's eagerly-awaited early music weekends at the South Bank proved to be a clear winner. Yet again we were shaken out of our insularity by contact with some of the finest performers from Europe — names both familiar and less well-known.

The Festival began with Pickett's own **New London Consort** performing, one-to-a-part, Bach's four Orchestral Suites. This approach paid off (see my review of Rifkin's concert in 1999, *H&F* vol.8 no.2 p.37) with a great gain in transparency and polish, and no loss of dramatic power — indeed it can be argued that the resulting contrast between wind and a smaller string section is much greater, and packs a greater punch, than those

performances where multiple strings attempt to compete with the brass. What we have with these works is not exactly chamber music, but certainly something more intimate, more knowing if you like, than music for public concert. After a short break **Andreas Staier** performed Bach's *Goldberg Variations* with great virtuosity, and his fans were well-pleased. I found his approach a little strait-jacketed — but perhaps had been spoilt by both the Pickett and memories of Uri Caine's madcap interpretations (on CD W&W 910054-2: highly recommended).

The following day began with **Alia Musica**, a group exploring some of the music of Judaeo-Spain and its relationship with other traditions throughout the Mediterranean. This was a fascinating and innovative concert, perhaps sapped only by the environment of the Queen Elizabeth Hall — too secular to do justice to this liturgical music which is of great simplicity but undoubted power. From Italy, **Ensemble 415** performed two works by Boccherini. His Quintet op 31 no 4 was in the first half, a brilliant and stylish performance: these quintets work so much better on period instruments. The second half consisted of the same composer's *Stabat Mater*. I should point out that many listeners felt that this was the highlight of the weekend — a real revelation; I, however, had a couple of reservations, mainly about the approach of Agnès Mellon, who undoubtedly has a voice of great beauty and warmth but persists, like so many French early music singers, in employing a heavy and persistent vibrato. Whatever the arguments for or against using vibrato in 18th-century music, there surely can be no case for employing it so liberally in the voice and so sparingly in the strings — such a dichotomy is an uneasy pairing. I'm afraid I missed the last concert of the evening, Catherine King and Charles Daniels singing *Airs-de-cour* accompanied by Jacob Heringman on the lute, but have heard very good reports of it.

The final day began with **Ensemble Clément Janequin** with a programme of French chansons organised around a conceptual banquet. This was superbly done, despite fussy stage presentation (in fact, surprisingly, this was something few of the groups performing throughout the weekend had clearly thought out). The singer, **María Cristina Kiehr,** accompanied by Jean-Marc Aymes on harpsichord, presented an interesting recital of early 17th-century music; then followed a concert of French Baroque music with **Les Talens Lyriques** under Christophe Rousset, again superbly done. In the latter concert the composer Leclair once again jumped out as a name whose worth far exceeds his current reputation. The weekend came to a triumphant conclusion with the **Amsterdam Loeki Stardust Quartet**'s performance of parts of Bach's *Art of Fugue*. The whole weekend was an unqualified success and congratulations are due to organisers and performers alike and we look forward to this year's festival with impatience.

PH

1st Diego Fernández Festival of Spanish Keyboard Music
Mojácar - Garrucha - Vera (Almería, Spain)
12-16 October 2000

Mojácar, on the southern coast of Spain, is more famous for its parador, citadel and beach culture than for Spanish keyboard music. But it proved a powerful point of attraction for an excellent symposium organised by Luisa Morales last autumn. The festival was dedicated to one of Spain's most important instrument makers, Diego Fernández Caparrós, who made harpsichords for Queen Isabel Farnese, the Infante don Gabriel, the Duchess of Osuna and the famous castrato Farinelli, who took one of Fernández's instruments back with him to Italy. Diego Fernández was baptised in the nearby town of Vera in 1701, and the festival began with the unveiling of a commemorative plaque at the parish church of La Virgen del Pilar. Several of Spain's current generation of harpsichord builders exhibited instruments in a small but delightful exhibition at the Parador Nacional. Among more conventional copies of one- and two-manual harpsichords in the franco-flemish style, and a flemish virginals, an unusual vertical claviciterium by Rafael Marijuán attracted considerable interest and comment.

The symposium itself was divided between sessions on instruments and sessions on repertoire. Beryl Kenyon de Pascual, Pedro Calahorra, Cristina Bordas and Grant O'Brien all presented the results of new research which suggested that the time has come for a comprehensive survey of our current state of knowledge about harpsichords and pianos of Spanish manufacture. Eleven surviving instruments are known to have been built in Spain, but our understanding of their design and knowledge of their builders is partial and scattered in many published and unpublished studies which urgently need to be synthesised. It is to be hoped that last autumn's festival will serve as a focus for future, more co-ordinated work in this field.

Papers on performance and repertoire were given by, among others, Alma Espinosa, Linton Powell, Esther Morales, Genoveva Gálvez, Julieta Alvarado and Isabel Rocha. A paper by Jane Clark was read in her absence. The variety and range of topics concerning the Spanish repertoire and its performance was wide and full of interest. The perennial question of the supposed 'Spanishness' of Spanish music, indeed Spanish culture as a whole, was never very far away. Here again, there is scope for further work in a more integrated way, and the publication of the papers from this conference will add another body of research to the excellent survey edited by Malcolm Boyd and Juan José Carreras (Cambridge University Press) in 1998.

Finally, there was the music. The parish church at Vera proved a magical venue for Bruno Turner directing the Música Reservata de Barcelona, and for a quite exquisite harpsichord recital by Luisa Morales, featuring several works by Scarlatti and Soler but performed in a way which emphasised their elegance and brooding character. Sheli Nan gave two concerts, including one specially for children, and in a useful reminder of the strong Arabic influence on Spanish culture, Begoña Olavide directed a concert of mudéjar music from the belvedere of Mojácar castle.

This was an excellent symposium which brought together a very high quality field of international experts to play, discuss and listen together in an atmosphere of great conviviality. The organisation was splendid, as was the hospitality, much of it supplied by local authorities and cultural groups, who were clearly amazed to find that one of their local boys had done so well for himself in the 18th century, and delighted that so many people had come from around the world to help them celebrate that fact. The second international Diego Fernández festival will take place from 8-11 October this year.

Barry Ife

DISC REVIEWS

John Blow: Venus and Adonis
New London Consort / Philip Pickett
Queen Elizabeth Hall,10 December 2000

The New London Consort under its director, Philip Pickett, has been presenting a series of concerts of English music specifically relating to the masque tradition. In December we were treated to a performance of Blow's *Venus and Adonis*, unlikely to be bettered, at least as regards the stylish singing and instrumental playing, and, above all, for its dramatic impact. Superficially, Blow's mini-opera lacks both the pretty tunefulness and the unforgiving descent into the powerful climactic lament of its better-known sister, *Dido and Aeneas*. However, as Pickett triumphantly demonstrated, this more rhetorical and less playful (although not without its moments) musical text of Blow packs no mean punch. This was partly due to the superb soloists employed — Joanne Lunn (Venus), Roderick Williams (Adonis) and Rachel Elliott (Cupid), and particularly to the decision to perform the choruses one-to-a-part: this scale works well with Bach, and how much more appropriate for this intimate, courtly music. Much praise is also due to those two continuo stalwarts, Paula Chateauneuf and David Roblou. The whole piece flowed from Act to Act — pastoral and bucolic, comic, amatory, erotic and tragic by turn. The opera was preceded by a first half made up of the type of various items that could well have been heard in the first English public concerts, from trumpet and violin sonatas to keyboard and guitar solos. The whole event proved to be one of those rare evenings where nothing seems out of place, and one comes away with the impression that one has listened to familiar music truly for the first time.

PH

Bernardo Pasquini (1637-1710)
Variationi e Partite 1702
Silvia Rambaldi (harpsichord)
Tactus 631801

The accompanying notes for this CD by Piero Gargiulo are generously provided in Italian, English, German and French but, apart from a photograph and dedication to her parents and thanks to her un-named teachers, there is no information about the performer or the instrument.

When reviewing music with which one is unfamiliar, it can be useful to ask oneself the question, "Would I buy this CD for a friend (as opposed to a colleague)?" In this case my answer is probably not, and the next step is to question whether it is the fault of the composer or of his interpreter. Before answering this, it is worth remembering that Pasquini holds an important place in both the sacred and the secular musical life of Rome at the end of the 17th century. Brought up on Palestrina and Frescobaldi, he worked with Corelli and Alessandro Scarlatti and taught Durante, Muffat, Della Ciaia, Gasparini and Zipoli. He was extremely prolific in the production of operas, oratorios, secular cantatas and songs, and even more so in his instrumental music of which he collected together about 160 pieces towards the end of his life, many in 1702 according to the Berlin manuscript which was used for this recording. Historically his music is thus very interesting, and a modern edition would be of interest. This is an enthusiastic rendition of a number of works particularly celebrating his genius at variation form, including those upon the Bergamasca and the Folia. The richly encrusted melodic lines are beautifully moulded by Silvia Rambaldi on a sympathetically rich-sounding instrument. In conclusion, it is the fault of neither the composer nor the performer, but perhaps there is just 'too much of a good thing' for the average listener. If, on the other hand, you want to study the influence of early 17th-century composers upon those of the 18th century, this will be useful, and the playing is lively enough to hold your interest.

Penelope Cave

Jacques Duphly
Pieces de Clavecin
Joseph Payne (harpsichord)
Centaur CRC 2421

Jacques Duphly (1715-1789) is just one of the many French composer-harpsichordists that remain largely unknown to musicians outside the confines of those with an interest in (and love of) 18th-century keyboard music in France. Duphly, Balbastre and other worthies are the submerged part of the iceberg, of which the great Couperin dynasty is the merely visible portion.

In the selection of pieces from three of Duphly's four volumes of *Pieces de Clavecin*, the eminent American player Joseph Payne clearly relishes and loves this music, and this is a release that exudes affection as well as dedication. Grace and a melodic nobility go hand-in-hand with the more overtly virtuoso pieces, whose figurations acknowledge both the examples of Domenico Scarlatti and, nearer to home, Rameau.

Favourite tracks of mine include the simple yet affecting *Rondeau* [7], *La Felix* [9] (this could, perhaps, have been a shade more *nobilmente*), *Les Graces* [10], where Duphly specifies a de-synchronisation of the hands and the grand and massively eloquent 285-bar *Chaconne* [18]. Why isn't this affirmatory and life-enhancing work played more often? Shame on all the *clavecinistes* who ignore this composer!

Writing of Duphly in 1752, the composer Pierre-Louis Daquin commented: "He has much lightness of touch and a certain softness which, sustained by ornaments, marvellously render the character of his pieces." Daquin also opined that "in general his pieces are sweet and amiable: they take after their father."

Joseph Payne certainly seems to do full justice to this music - the playing is stylish and elegant, the recorded sound clear and resonant without

being too full or cloying, and it amply conveys the strong yet sensual sound of the Blanchet copy by William Dowd. Payne's own sleeve notes are illuminating and help to 'flesh out' this somewhat enigmatic figure who nonetheless was one of the outstanding *clavecinistes* of his time.

I wholeheartedly recommend this CD to both converts and initiates alike, but particularly to those who are not yet familiar with the modest yet fresh and undeniable charms of Duphly's music.

Richard Leigh Harris

Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer
Musicalischer Parnassus, vols.1 and 2 (also includes Suites 2 and 8 from *Musicalisches Blumen-Büschlein*)
Luc Beauséjour (harpsichord)
Naxos 8.554218, 8.554446

Fischer's *Musicalischer Parnassus* suites were published in 1738, but give the impression of having been compiled over a long period (*Musicalisches Blumen-Büschlein* appeared forty years earlier, in 1698). *Pace* the programme note, the music is firmly in the south German /Austrian tradition of composers such as Froberger, Fux and Gottlieb Muffat, with its cosmopolitan juxtaposition of French dance movements and pieces with Italian or Latin names ('Toccata', 'Passacaglia', 'Preludium' and the like), all under German-language titles. The music is attractive and tuneful, mostly modest in scale but unfailingly effective and with some quite adventurous harmony in the preludes.

I much enjoyed Beauséjour's natural-sounding and straightforward playing. His rhythm is controlled but never stiff, with a pleasing hint of *notes inégales* and expressive rubato, yet with a refreshing absence of the 'mannered' style currently fashionable in Froberger performances. The dance movements are graceful and nicely contrasted. Speeds are well judged save only for the two Sarabandes, which are surely too slow: these simple pieces strike me as being of the quick English variety rather than the slow, heavily ornamented kind typical of Bach.

The instruments are said to be "after Grabner 1774" (*sic* - presumably the much altered and restored J. H. Gräbner of 1744 which once sported a 16' rank, now mercifully removed again) and "after Hemsch & Blanchet" (*sic* again — there is no evidence that those two makers ever collaborated). Both make a good sound although they are, of course, in the long-scaled Ruckers/French style. They are hardly the most appropriate for this music, which is likely to have been conceived for the shorter-scaled, single-manual harpsichord with just two 8' ranks (and no buff stop) produced by Viennese makers, or illustrated on the title-page of Gottlieb Muffat's *Componimenti Musicali* (also published by Leopold of Augsburg, a year after *Musicalischer Parnassus*). Probably Fischer also had the clavichord in mind, at least as a domestic alternative, for everything is playable on its common early 18th-century compass of C/E - c^3 (with two split sharps), save only for a single Eb in the Chaconne of Suite 6.

Richard Maunder

J S Bach
Harpsichord Concertos
Volume Four
The Purcell Quartet
Chandos CHAN 0641

Solo Concertos
Volume Four
Musica Alta Ripa
Musikproduktion Dabringhaus und Grimm MDG 309 0684-2

Both discs offer the 'triple' concerto BWV 1044 and the concerto in C for two harpsichords BWV 1061; the Purcell Quartet add the D minor harpsichord concerto BWV 1052, and Musica Alta Ripa the two-harpsichord version (BWV 1062) of the double violin concerto and the Italian Concerto for solo harpsichord. Both are excellent recordings exhibiting very stylish 'state-of-the-art' baroque playing with impeccable intonation and ensemble, by one-to-a-part string groups. The Purcell use two fine copies of the c1704 Mietke harpsichord; Musica Alta Ripa play on a Zell copy and one made in 1998 "in the style of the 18th century" — but don't be put off, for it is a good instrument with a distinctly Mietke-ish sound (it certainly isn't the Italian-style instrument shown in the rather incongruous photo — including three recorders and two cellos — on the back page of the programme booklet).

I can thoroughly recommend both discs (apart from one reservation), and it's hard to choose between them since the performances are so similar; even the speeds are virtually identical. The Purcell quartet have a slightly lighter sound than their German rivals, but that may simply be due to the difference in recording acoustic.

My reservation concerns the use of a double bass or '*violone*', which seems to have become *de rigueur* in such 'baroque' groups (it is used on both recordings). In fact the sole evidence for its possible addition in any of the works on these discs comes from a set of parts for BWV 1044 copied after Bach's death, one of which is labelled "*Violon[e] e Violoncello*". It would be most unlike Bach himself to have provided a single part to be shared by both instruments, and there is no precedent at all for doubling the cello throughout at 16' pitch (Bach's subsequently added '*Violone*' part in the A major harpsichord concerto BWV 1055, for example, plays only in the *tutti* sections, and in any case it's not absolutely certain that he intended a 16' rather than an 8' instrument). In particular, the autograph score of BWV 1062 is unequivocally headed "Concerto à due Clavicembali obligati, 2 Violini, Viola e Violoncello", which surely leaves no room for any addition. The double bass on the Musica Alta Ripa recording of this concerto sounds elephantine, especially in the first movement semiquavers. I rest my case!

Richard Maunder

J S Bach
Klavierbüchlein für W F Bach
Joseph Payne (harpsichord, organ and clavichord)
Hänssler 137

The little (or not so little) Keyboard Book that J S Bach compiled for the edification and amusement of his eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann, remains one of the most affectionately-regarded of keyboard tutors to have survived from the baroque period. It remains a wonderful compendium of *Praeludia*, a couple of *manualiter* chorales, plus early versions of the two-part Inventions, the fifteen three-part Sinfonias, as well as eleven Preludes from the *Well-Tempered Clavier*.

It is an enjoyable and stimulating experience to hear this double CD played with such consistent eloquence and thoughtful intelligence by Joseph Payne. He has chosen to utilise organ, harpsichord and clavichord in this

recording, and not always in the expected manner - one of the chorales, *Jesu meine Freude*, for instance, is played effectively on the David Jacques Way copy of a Franco-Flemish harpsichord. Payne's expressive and affecting playing of the clavichord *almost* persuaded your reviewer that he liked the instrument - but not quite!

Choice of instrument in this repertoire is apt to open the proverbial can of worms; what is quite clear, however, is that J S Bach was not dogmatic, but actually quite liberal as regards what keyboard instrument might be best suited to a particular piece. As Payne notes in his accompanying essay, "Bach's primary concern was never with instruments, but with the spirituality of his compositions" - a precept that organ-anoraks might well be advised to heed ....

Above all, *Klavierbüchlein* provided a model (or, indeed, many stylistic models) for Wilhelm Friedemann on which to base his own burgeoning compositions. This highly imaginative as well as thorough and graduated grounding in contrapuntal and harmonic principles should remain, surely, as valid today as it undoubtedly did to the Bach family circle in the mid-1720s.

In Joseph Payne's hands, this very special volume has been vividly brought to life, whether played on the harpsichord, organ or clavichord.

Richard Leigh Harris

Telemann
Musique de Table, vols.1 - 4
Orchestra of the Golden Age
Naxos 8.553724, 8.553725, 8.553731, 8.553732

Telemann's three sets of *Musique de Table* were published by the composer himself in 1733. Very methodically, each cycle (which was probably meant to be performed complete) starts with a French overture and suite, continues with a quartet, a concerto, a trio and a solo sonata, and is rounded off by a short 'conclusion' having the same scoring as the overture. As the title suggests, the music is entertaining rather than profound: it was, after all, intended as background music for dinner parties, not as something to be given full attention in the concert hall.

It is hard to decide what size of 'orchestra' Telemann had in mind, if indeed that's the right word. The suites and concertos are described *as "à 7 instruments"* and the music was issued in seven part-books, without a score (as was normal in the 18th century: you just handed out the parts and played the music, with no score-wielding conductor telling you what to do or when to play). The instrumentation is varied and as a result a part-book labelled, say, 'trumpet' at the start may contain a flute, violin or oboe part for a later piece in the same set. Unless Telemann had some unusually versatile players, more than seven musicians would therefore have been needed for each cycle, but it is not always clear what the extras should do. In the second set, for example, the concerto has four violin parts but the overture and suite only two. Does this mean that two violinists are allowed to join the diners then, or are they supposed to play along with their colleagues, despite *"à 7 instruments"*? Some *Solo* and *Tutti* markings appear to be intended as instructions to partners where to drop out and re-enter, which seems to settle the point. What about the bass line? The cello sometimes has florid solos, but they are never marked *Solo*, so that part must be for a single player throughout. There is a continuo part as well, presumably for harpsichord. Should it be shared by a double bass? There are conflicting signals: some cello solos are accompanied only by continuo, which might suggest its addition; on the other hand some violin solos are accompanied by both cello and continuo, which makes a double bass pretty unlikely there (see my review of the J S Bach concerto recordings).

All of which points to a very small band for the suites and concertos, probably consisting only of a string quartet and a couple of extra violins, plus wind instruments as specified for individual pieces, and harpsichord continuo. The Orchestra of the Golden Age sounds a little bigger, but not excessively so, although one or two slightly muddy fast passages in the bass would no doubt have been clearer with a single cello and harpsichord. Otherwise, the performances are first-rate and the players have taken a lot of trouble to master every aspect of baroque style. I particularly enjoyed the beautiful solo string playing, and the bucolic horns, obviously not hand-stopped! The ensemble is excellent, the accentuation of 'good' and 'bad' notes is very convincing, and the music is delivered in a neat, crisp and straightforward manner that suits it very well.

Just a couple of quibbles (apart from the size of the orchestra): why aren't the crotchets in the second overture double-dotted, especially when they are combined with dotted quavers and semiquavers? And why use a bassoon in the trio on disc 3 and the sonata for oboe and continuo on disc 4 when Telemann clearly specifies the cello? (The French version of the programme note even calls the latter *'Sonate pour hautbois, continuo et basson obligé'*, as if it were a trio.) But these are minor criticisms of some very enjoyable recordings. Posh restaurants take note: throw away your 'Four Seasons' discs and play these instead!

Richard Maunder

Handel
Harpsichord Works, volume 1
Sophie Yates (harpsichord)
Chandos CHAN 0644

Sophie Yates presents us with the first six harpsichord works of Handel's 1733 publication. This disc is hopefully intended to herald the complete keyboard works in a few further volumes and was recorded in 1998. Like the *Eight Great Suites* of 1720, it is a motley collection from different periods, and was probably something of a patchwork of Handel's works. It was published without his permission, and may well contain music composed before the previously-published set and some he would not have chosen to publish at all. Handel seems to have been a victim of his own success; even in his preface to the 1720 collection he wrote:

> I have been obliged to publish some of the following Lessons, because Surrepticious and incorrect copies of them have got Abroad. I have added several new ones to make the Word more useful, which if it meets with a favourable Reception; I will still proceed to publish more, reckoning it my duty, with my Small Talentt, to Serve a Nation from which I receiv'd so Generous a Protection.

The glorious and grand, partly improvisatory prelude in Bb opens the CD with aplomb. This is also a good showpiece for displaying the rich sound of the copy of Colmar Ruckers harpsichord by Mackinnon and

Waitzman.

As in previous recordings, Sophie Yates' style encompasses both the flexible and the virtuoso elements of the music she is interpreting. Handel's harpsichord music has tended to be less admired than his other compositions, but here we find an energetic exponent of this immediately captivating, musical personality who had few rivals in his own day. Sophie Yates plays Handel's music with real affection and conviction.

The Chaconne (Suite no.2 in G major), with its 21 variations on an eight-bar harmonic pattern, is a triumph! Handel almost overreaches himself in the task of keeping the listeners' interest alive in this work of nearly eleven-and-a-half minutes, and I believe the original dwindles into a mere sketch, but it is finished off satisfactorily in the edition used by Sophie Yates, and her extra embellishments for the repeats, glittering throughout, absolutely thrilled at the close of the last two variations. One can only look forward to Volume Two and the even more daunting challenge of bringing off the final work of the 1733 set; also a Chaconne in G major, probably a record of his ability to improvise, it contains 62 more formulaic variations on an eight-bar bass!

Handel's grasp of Italian and French elements is well-known and clearly visible in these works. His formula for the suite is not strict in either these or in the *Eight Great Suites*, where only the fourth suite is made up of the four standard dance forms in classic order. Sophie Yates' use of *inegalité* is well-judged, and she gives beautiful examples of this expressive French manner in the *Allmands* which open the last four suites. Handel displays the more Italianate features in his predilection for variations, his preference for the *Corrente* rather than *Courante* and movements intitled *Sonata* and *Allegro*. The opening of the sixth suite is interesting in its nice mixture of prelude within the eponymous *Allmand*, and the plasticity of Sophie Yates' playing enables us to appreciate this. The *Saraband* of the fourth suite, with two variations, is perhaps less forgiving in its paced nobility but is followed by a tribute to his adopted country, the succinct eleven-bar English *Jigg* in a most happily unrestrained performance, and she finishes the sixth suite, and the recording itself, with Handel's most extended *gigue* of 143 virtuosic bars.

In conclusion, this is a recording you should not only buy for your own pleasure but also have confidence in giving to friends, and remember to order the following volumes as soon as ever they are available!

Penelope Cave

Domenico Scarlatti
The Cat's Fugue and Sonatas for the Harpsichord
Elaine Comparone (harpsichord)
Lyra Early Music Series LEMS 8043

An Italian in Spain
Jane Clark (harpsichord)
Janiculum Recordings JAN D204

Complete Keyboard Sonatas
Volume Two
Michael Lewin (piano)
Naxos 8.553067

Three new CDs of Scarlatti sonatas have been released recently, two with performances on the harpsichord and one on the piano.

Elaine Comparone plays a Frank Hubbard replica of 1972, based on a Ruckers instrument of 1646 that was enlarged in 1780 by Pascal Taskin. Some of the music chosen is well-known, such as *The Cat's Fugue* K30, and some much less well-known. The 17 selected sontatas are grouped here in terms of keys, rather than in the groupings (largely pairs) that Ralph Kirkpatrick noticed in the Scarlatti sources and in which he listed the sonatas in his catalogue (*Domenico Scarlatti*, Princeton 1953). The first three sonatas on this disc are in F minor, K239, 187 and 183. There are three sonatas in B minor, K27, 197 and 409; two in D major; two in G minor; and two in D minor, together with five isolated sonatas in various keys.

The playing is lively, bright and very rhythmical. The *tempi* are well chosen, and the performance exhibits many delightful sounds with contrasts of manuals and tones. The ornaments are very clear and played in a congenial idiomatic manner. The B minor sonata, K409, provides good examples of a composition with wide leaps for the hands and some harmonic progressions involving attractive chromaticisms. The G major sonata, K201, is a delightful lesser-known movement with some highly engaging semiquaver patterns, and the D minor sonata, K517, is a fine work to round off the disc with an exuberant flourish. The disc overall is notable for the high quality of the music chosen, although there are few samples of music that move at a slow tempo. This is a very enjoyable performance, recommended for pleasurable listening as well as for a fine interpretative study for players.

N.B.: The disc gives Scarlatti's year of death as 1744, when it should be 1757.

Jane Clark's disc offers another Scarlatti miscellany, a collection of 18 sonatas that include a couple of the groupings that Scarlatti devised in terms of two- or three-movement 'works' . There are three D major sonatas at the start, K490-2 (the third of these has long been a favourite) and the sonatas in C major-minor, K205-6. Otherwise there is a wide selection of pieces, albeit perhaps rather too many in a rather limited range of keys. One particularly striking piece is the *Pastorale* sonata in C, K513, a lovely movement whose materials function at two contrasting *tempi*.

Both these discs include interesting essays by the artists on the music they selected, although it is a pity that Jane Clark's disc does not say anything about the instrument being played. Her playing is articulate and persuasive, and there is a pleasant contrast here between movements of different tempi and feelings. The Spanish element in Scarlatti's music is demonstrated here with *seguidilla* and *fandango* movements, showing how the composer absorbed the music he encountered in Iberia. The two sonatas in G, K432 and 201, are lovely tuneful pieces of moderate technical difficulty that might well appeal to those who have not come across them before. Both of these are fine fandangos.

The third of these new CDs presents 19 Scarlatti sonatas on the piano in a performance by **Michael Lewin**. It is known that in Spain Scarlatti wrote and played sonatas on single-manual instruments, and so at least some of his sonatas will be easily playable on the piano. The question nowadays is whether recordings of his music on the piano can seriously take their place alongside those on the harpsichord or organ. Pianists should be encouraged to explore Scarlatti's music, but should be directed to seek out pieces which clearly do not need two manuals and involve close hands in awkward positions or cross-hand figurations which need two clearly different sounds for their

presentation. What can be done on the harpsichord and organ cannot be presented equally effectively on the piano in terms of texture and variety of tone. Some of the heavier, weightier chordal passages in Michael Lewin's pieces lose something on the piano that would sound more congenial on the harpsichord.

The disc begins with a sprightly performance of the well-known D major sonata, K492, and after the A minor sonata (K3) come two pairs of two sonatas - in D minor-major (K32-33) and in A major (K208-9). The latter are two of the composer's most eloquent and expressive works, and they are beautifully played here. They can be recommended to any keyboard player looking for fine examples of Scarlatti's melodic invention. The E major sonata, K20, calls for lively fingerwork. Its basic diatonic cheerfulness is contrasted with chromaticisms that bring a tinge of melancholy. The elegant B minor sonata, K27, used to be very popular. Was it based on a vocal piece, or on reminiscences of one? Its harmonic progressions seem as though they might be elaborations of a simpler vocal work for one or more voices.

The D minor sonata, K141, contains rapidly repeated notes and semiquaver passages that are not best suited to the piano, and here the harpsichord is sadly missed. The D minor *Andante* that follows, K213, is a lovely gentle piece with bright, slender textures that call for a *cantabile* tone, and this comes across very pleasantly here. The G major sonata, K14, was a great favourite with Dame Myra Hess, who was often able to amuse us with her light-fingered dexterity and charm. Michael Lewin is a little heavier on the piano here, but Scarlatti's carefree happiness still comes through. Another G major sonata, K146, is less well-known, and its attractive presentation here may win new admirers for it. How imaginatively Scarlatti could use the central areas of the keyboard! The A major sonata, K322, goes well with the earlier sonatas in that key. Its moderate pace and quiet two-part texture make it one of the easier sonatas. The movement is marked *Allegro*, although Michael Lewin's attractive tempo is a little on the slow side. The great F minor sonata, K481, is a fine slow movement. Here it lasts for seven-and-a-half minutes. One feels in a movement of this scope that Scarlatti would have introduced some variations when playing repeats as well as some extra ornaments. Here, in such a lengthy piece, some variations at least would have been welcome. Sadly, none of the players on these three new discs introduce any variant figurations or ornaments of their own. Something might have been attempted, especially in the slow movements.

Michael Lewin's last piece is the D minor sonata K517. This is a fine sample of the composer's inventive genius - full of brilliance and exuberant energy in a *prestissimo* that is not often encountered in 18th-century music, and little known before the virtuosity of studies by Czerny and Liszt. Scarlatti, in many respects, was a pioneer of the keyboard virtuosity that was so much admired and so highly developed in the 19th century.

Scarlatti on the piano these days is a controversial practice, but there are some thought-provoking ideas on this disc.

Gwilym Beechey

Domenico Scarlatti
Sei sonate per mandolino e chitarra K77, K81, K88-91
Duo Capriccioso: Gertrud Tröster (baroque mandolin), Michael Tröster (baroque guitar)
Thorofon CTH 2325

> *Viuline, accumpagnateme nzurdia,*
> *e vuie, chitarre, nun ncasate 'a mano*
> *porto sta serenata e na vicina*
> *ca lle piace d' 'a sèntie 'a luntano.*
> *Mm' arraccumanno: 'a musichetta*
> *'è fina...*

[Violins – a muted accompaniment! and you, guitars, don't spare your fingers but send this serenade to my neighbour for she loves to listen from afar – and gentlemen – may the music be choice.]

The Sonatas K73, 77, 78, 81 and 88-91 have long posed a problem for Scarlatti scholars. Unlike all the others in the Kirkpatrick catalogue, they have both soprano-dominated textures and figured bass. Some critics made the not uncontested assertion that they had been written for violin, but when Didier Le Roux found a copy of the first movement in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal with the indication '*Sonatina per mandolino e cimbalo* [sic]' the truth finally came out. The duo Gertrud & Michael Tröster have now taken things in hand with this recording, which includes six of the eight sonatas mentioned above played on baroque mandolin and with the continuo part realised for baroque guitar. As one might expect, the Neopolitan and, *a fortieri*, the Spanish aspect of the music is thereby considerably enhanced. But there is something more. By the time of Salvatore di Giacomo's poem quoted above, the violin had largely replaced the mandolin usual in Scarlatti's day as melody instrument in the traditional serenade. That he knew of the original combination is clear from these rather sinister lines which open one of his *Sunnete Antiche*: *"A li ffeneste de la Vecaria / saglie, ogne ssera, a l'ùnnece sunnate, /* cu panduline e chitarre *scurdate, / la santanotte de li mammamia"* [Each evening on the stroke of eleven, the night watch of the *mammamia* climb, with out-of-tune mandolins and guitars, to the windows of *La Vecaria.*] (Here *mammamia* is a noun – the name of a Neapolitan street gang.) Even so, for Italian or Spanish street musicians to add these pieces to their repertoire nowadays, in whatever form, is only a music-lover's dream. (An exception might be the student 'street musicians' from the University of Salamanca whom I have seen on occasion playing the *vihuela* in the town squares.) But there is no reason why they should not find their way into the imaginary open air (*sereno*) of the theatre. Painters like Watteau and Fragonard, who revelled in painting scenes from the *théâtre italien* and its cousin the *vaudeville*, not infrequently place *strumenti a pizzico* in the hands of their characters. Such was the dominion of the *commedia dell'arte* in baroque and even rococo Europe that not only Italian dramatists like Goldoni but French ones as well, chief among them Marivaux, came to use its conventions in through-composed sentimental comedies. And of course much of this literature exists in German 'period' translations, as we know if only from Lessing's *Hamburgisches Dramaturgie*. It is in the enchanted world of *Arlecchino* and *Colombina*, their moonlit capers, that these sonatas and similar ones by Scarlatti's contemporaries should find a privileged place. Given the deplorable quality of the music in most productions of18th-century theatre, this could only mark an improvement. As for the present recording, it will be a delight for those who love the music of Scarlatti to rediscover it in the motley of

serenade. Judging from the *commedia dell' arte* figures painted for him by Gino Severini in Montegufoni (his villa near Cortona), Osbert Sitwell would have fainted with pleasure to have heard such strains in those ample rooms. Though there perhaps the lute stops of a harpsichord would make the best continuo.

Tristram Pugin

Antonio Soler
Sonatas for harpsichord, vols.5 and 6
Gilbert Rowland (harpsichord)
Naxos 8.554434, 8.554565

I'd forgotten what astonishing music this is: colourful, highly original, full of surprises, and amazingly varied. The style covers the whole range from Soler's teacher Scarlatti to his near-contemporary Haydn. As the programme note says, Soler was the most important composer active in Spain in the second half of the 18th century (not even excepting Boccherini, I would add). Rowland's playing is first-rate, and he dispatches the formidable technical difficulties with aplomb. His rhythm may seem slightly four-square at first, but further listening reveals a subtle and expressive flexibility.

I am less keen, however, on the instruments, both said to be copies of Pascal Taskin (1769) — no doubt the one in the Russell Collection, Edinburgh. Much of the music was written for the Infante Don Gabriel of Spain, who owned two harpsichords with compass FF - g^3 built for him in 1761 and 1775 by the Madrid maker Diego Fernández. They were single-manual instruments and probably had only two 8' ranks, without a 4'. Unfortunately neither is extant, but I imagine them as less refined than a Taskin and with a plainer sound — and certainly lacking the two manual's ability to switch registration instantly as Rowland often does on these recordings. At the same time I can't help suspecting that some of the more introverted sonatas were conceived for fortepiano, of the type represented by the Antunes (Lisbon 1767) in the Shrine to Music Museum, Vermillion. At least two of Soler's sonatas have been recorded on this instrument (Wildboar WLBR 9401, available from Lindum Records).

Richard Maunder

Ernst Wilhelm Wolf
Keyboard sonatas
Paul Simmonds (clavichord)
Ars Musici AM 1206-2

Paul Simmonds plays these pieces most persuasively on a clavichord after C G Hubert, 1771, which has a big dynamic range and sounds very well except — dare I say it? — for one or two slightly out-of-tune notes at the very top. I particularly enjoyed Paul's convincing *'non legato'*, which is a welcome antidote to the continuous *legato* style unthinkingly adopted by many fortepiano players nowadays.

So why don't I find the music itself more attractive (no reflection on Paul's fine playing, of course)? Certainly there are some interesting and original ideas, somewhat in the C P E Bach manner; but Wolf seems to lack Bach's sense of forward drive, and his ability to integrate his ideas into a larger structure — what Mozart called *'il filo'*. Even in the longest piece on this disc (the first movement of the D minor sonata) the music is made up of a series of short gestures and keeps coming to 'expressive pauses'. To my ear, the result, after so much striving for small-scale effect, is rather cloying. But I'm sure the music is very satisfying to play, and Paul obviously revels in it.

Richard Maunder

Chamber Round-Up

This is a good batch of discs, all of them offering performances of style and polish. It is particularly heartening to find so many good recordings of the still too-little-explored early baroque joining the catalogues. In contrast, some discs of the late baroque repertoire cause concern over the quality of the music recorded. This might be a symptom of aural fatigue — we've already heard a lot of this music before, or something very much like it - but it could also be that, in the late baroque, a good deal of composition was geared towards the domestic (amateur) market, with the result that the music is a lot more interesting to perform than it is to listen to. Whatever the explanation, record companies need to look more carefully at their programming of late baroque music.

Il Viaggio Musicale's rendition of **Marini**'s Opus One, **Affetti musicali** (Chandos CHAN 0660) gives the reviewer a great starting point. Marini is one of those figures vital to the development of an idiomatic instrumental style whom you read about much more often than hear. This disc is therefore warmly welcomed, and although I am not wild about straight-through recordings of musical editions which originally would have been used as source books (and in the case of Marini's work here, no doubt many of these pieces would have been employed as ritornellos for vocal works), the Italian ensemble manages to maintain our interest. This is achieved in two ways: firstly by the use of a variety of instruments, with melodies being played on the violin or cornett, and the accompaniment being provided by varying mixes of bassoon, trombone, violone, harp, theorbo, guitar, organ and virginal; secondly, the playing is commendably unfussy, devoid of the mannerisms that mar so many performances of baroque music. Thus is preserved the freshness of the craftsmanlike (if hardly inspired) music of Marini. The only disappointment for readers of this journal will be that the Italian virginals played by Pietro Pasquini remain very much in the background. It would be fascinating to hear this repertory with the lute-like, low-pitch Trasuntino featured in our last issue.

A little earlier in date were the publications of **Giovanni Croce**'s *Mascarate...per il Carnevale* and *Triaca Musicale*, which have been recorded by the superb vocal group **I Fagiolini** under the title **Carnevale Veneziano** (Chandos CHAN 0665). Humour, it is well said, does not travel over national boundaries, let alone over four centuries, and I have to say that, although the performances are first-rate, I found them embarrassing to listen to. The spectacle of a group of singers putting on silly voices to make fun of foreigners, women, the poor, slaves, those with disabilities, the old, etc, may have seemed like a good night out to the composer's yobbish patrons, but in 2001 it fills me with dismay. The disc is thus worth buying for its social history value, and perhaps for the superb instrumental interludes directed by David Miller; otherwise, steer clear, and pray that I Fagiolini will next turn their attention to something less cringemaking!!

Lully was another Italian, but one destined to make an indelible mark upon French music. I warmly

welcome Naxos' new series in which **Le Concert Spirituel,** under Hervé Niquet, will record all of Lully's large-scale church music, the ***grands motets***. The opening collection (vol. 1, Naxos 8.554397) contains Lully's two best-known works: his first piece of ceremonial church music, the *Miserere*, and the fateful *Te Deum*, which would prove the cause of his death while conducting a performance of it ten years later. The other work featured on this disc, *Plaude laetare Gallia*, with a text by Perrin, is a real gem, and I look forward eagerly to future volumes. The orchestral playing is crisp and defined, and the choral singing is nearly of the same calibre; it is a pity that some of the solos are so variable. It is also disappointing that the otherwise-commendable Naxos so often produces such poor liner notes.

Opus 111's truly excellent exploration of the music of Naples continues with the oratorio ***Il Giudizio Universale*** (1681), now attributed to **Giuseppe Cavallo** and not as formerly to Francesco Cavalli. This performance by the **Cappella de'Turchini** under Antonio Florio (OPS 30-262) is first-rate, and the music is attractive and theatrical, but unfortunately it does not match up to its theme of the Last Judgement. Here the sounding of the last trump packs no more punch than a camp bishop at a North London dinner-party. Best to listen to it without the words and instead make up your own *opera buffa* plot. Only more humorous are the disc's liner notes which try to persuade us to take it all seriously.

Daniel Purcell had the misfortune to be Henry's brother — had it been otherwise, he might have received more recognition for his own considerable compositional skills. This recording by **Sprezzatura** (**Brotherly Love: The Music of Daniel Purcell**, Etcetera KTC 1232) is therefore a welcome introduction to Daniel's songs, theatre music, cantatas and instrumental compositions. It is a relief to find a varied programme with contrasting instrumentation: Piers Adams and Emma Murphy play on recorders in some items, Julia Bishop and Sharon Lindo honour the violin on others, and continuo is shared between Michael Fields on lute, theorbo and guitar and Steven Devine on harpsichord and organ, with David Hatcher supporting and dominating in turn on the viol. The disc is electrified with the voice of Evelyn Tubb, a virtuoso singer who is well at home in this repertory. Evelyn Tubb does not take a backseat view of interpretation and relishes the theatricality of all of these songs, a quality she expresses with an amazing repertory of colour and tone from her remarkable voice. While in a live performance this mannered approach (I do not use the word in a derogatory sense) can be forceful, on this recording I found it a bit over-the-top, and wonder whether it always does justice to the continuity and flow of Purcell's music. Highlights of this recording are the two instrumental items, a slight but attractive Lesson for the harpsichord, and a much more substantial Violin Sonata, the latter superbly played by Julia Bishop. The disc comes with a characteristically worthwhile essay by the producer, Anthony Rooley. An important addition to our recorded repertoire of mid-baroque English music.

Hotteterre 'Le Romain' is probably best (if erroneously) known as the inventor of the three-section baroque flute: his real part in the history of this instrument, however, was to popularise it through the composition of some very fine music. In an outstanding release Naxos have given us **Volume Two** (Naxos 8.553708) of **Hotteterre's** music, here given greater variety by playing some of the music on the flute, and, as 'permitted' by the composer, transposing some of it for the recorder. The playing by both **Philippe Allain-Dupré** (flute) and **Laurence Pottier** (recorder) is superb, warmly expressive and consistently stylish: a great deal of thought has obviously been given to the character of each movement. In addition, Allain-Dupré makes the eminently sensible (but so little observed) decision that if an instrument contemporary with the date of composition is not available, an earlier rather than later instrument should be employed. This recording is marred only by two things, an error in the track numbers where 28-33 are in fact 17-22, and 17-27 are 23-33, and secondly, a rather clumsy translation of the informative liner notes: a pity that Naxos does not show a care equal to that given by the musicians recorded here. Another French wind composer of a later generation was **Boismortier**. A selection of his music for oboes, recorders, flutes, musette and hurdy-gurdy are given entertaining performances on another Naxos disc (8.554456) with **Le Concert Spirituel** under Hervé Niquet. A disc well worth exploring.

After all the attention given to Bach last year, we are now seeing steadily-growing attention being given to Handel. Perhaps this is because, unlike the anally-retentive hagiographers of the master from Leipzig, Handel's technique — for instance in writing a fugue — was to start it all off and then (as if deciding that was too much like hard work) letting the voices go off into free material, to the delight of listeners and performers but causing analysts much aggravation, especially as the scores themselves allow a great deal of latitude in performance. This makes Handel risky for recording artists: you really need to feel at home in his idiom to make something of his sketches for improvisation. Well, it might not be quite as bad as all that, but how much more easily can one delight in his **Recorder Sonatas** (BIS CD 955) than in, say, an album of Bach's sonatas. Handel presents us with an individual operatic scene, and plays around with the form and texture accordingly. The performances here by **Dan Laurin** on treble recorder, **Masaaki Suzuki** alternating between harpsichord and organ (...I wonder if we are playing too much baroque continuo on the organ ... harpsichords were more plentiful, particularly in the domestic sphere into which these sonatas would have made their way, even if their original destination had been the public concerts, as the liner notes here suggest...), and **Hidemi Suzuki** on cello (not strictly necessary, but discreetly played). Laurin's range of articulation, nose for embellishment and sympathy for this music make it a must for all Handel devotees. I remember the excitement of hearing Bruggen's first recordings of these pieces, and it is to Laurin's credit that he can revive in the listener that same (but different) sense of wonder. The disc comes with excellent notes, if at times contentious. (I think that to describe Dart's edition of the so-called *Fitzwilliam Sonatas* as a 'fraud' is to misunderstand the aims of musicology in the 1940s: I for one owe Dart a great debt in being able to explore this music as a schoolboy with my recorder-playing friends.) The recording takes place in a resonant environment which adds to the atmosphere of the recording, and Masaaki Suzuki's interpretation of the richly-figured continuo lines is excellent: here at last is a continuo player who is not content to merely support the soloist but can engage with him as an equal.

A fascinating disc which explores two early German violin-composers comes from **Pavlo Beznosiuk**. **Walther**'s accompanied *Scherzi*, typically multi-sectional works or variations, are interspersed with **Westhoff**'s unaccompanied violin *Suites* which follow the Allemande-Courante-Sarabande-Gigue model. The works of both composers are really worthy of attention in their own right and not merely as predecessors of Bach. They are performed with breathtaking virtuoso elegance by Beznosiuk, sensitively supported by Paula Chateauneuf on the theorbo, Richard Tunnicliffe on the viol and Timothy Roberts on harpsichord and organ. This is **volume 1** (ETCETERA KTC 1224); its companion is eagerly awaited.

Bach's **Gamba sonatas** are also well represented in the catalogue. Here they are played with a passionate romanticism by the superlative **Pieter Wispelwey** on the violoncello piccolo — as much vibrato and rubato as any Tortellier fan could wish. The twist with the continuo part is that it is played, again with excellence, by **Richard Egarr** on an organ, a harpsichord and a Broadwood fortepiano, although the latter fails to convince; perhaps a clavichord would have been a better choice. Daniel Yeadon provides discreet cello continuo support in the organ and harpsichord works. The gamba sonatas are interspersed with arrangements of Bach preludes and concerto movements: the last, taken from the harpsichord concerto BWV 1056, accompanied by fortepiano, sounds a dead-ringer for an early-20th-century salon transcription. Practically every piece included is in the 'passionate' vein, and it might have been just as well to let Egarr supply some lighter, brilliant solos: we could certainly have done without the bizarre transcription of the Italian concerto with organ RH and harpsichord LH accompanying the piccolo cello! Wispelwey's playing is engaged and singing — but whether this disc will please the early music purist or the mainstream classical lover remains to be seen.

Another variation on a Bach theme is the **Purcell Quartet**'s performance of Bach's organ **Trio Sonatas** BWV 525-530 (Chandos CHAN 0654) in arrangements by the group's gamba player, Richard Boothby. These are delicious and idiomatic transcriptions with, as one might expect, some rather tasty lines for the viol da gamba. The performances are first-rate, from Catherine Mackintosh and Catherine Weiss on the violins, and Robert Woolley on the harpsichord.

An older tradition of Bach arrangement is the performance by assorted instruments - here, flute, different sorts of oboes, bassoon, strings and harpsichord in various combinations - of **Bach**'s ***Die Kunst die Fuge*** by the **Concerto Italiano** under Rinaldo Alessandrini (Opus 111 OPS 30-191). The latter performs as harpsichord solos the four canons in the collection; these are the only pieces that sound at all remotely as Bach might have imagined them (it is almost certain that the *Art of Fugue* was intended for keyboard performance), but that shouldn't stop anyone from enjoying the disc. Concerto Italiano is one of my favourite Baroque ensembles, and all the performances here are full of beautiful and impressive musicianship. A disc of 19th- and 20th-century **Bach transcriptions** played on modern piano by the Finnish pianist **Risto Lauriala** (Naxos 8.553761) is also worthy of attention. There is no Busoni here but a wonderful transcription of the violin d-minor chaconne by Alexander Siloti, along with arrangements by Saint-Saens, Reger, d'Albert and Kabalevsky. The disc reveals another stage in Bach reception.

The best of the Bach discs, for my money, is the superb re-mastering of the first complete recording of **Book I of 'The 48'** made by the Swiss pianist **Edwin Fischer** between 1933-1936 (Naxos Historical 8.110651-52, 2 CDs). Fischer's command of the modern piano produces some brilliant washes of sounds, particularly in the preludes. But what is most noticeable is the general Hindemithian neoclassicism of the interpretations: indeed the fugues, with each entry deliberately signalled, resemble the kind of abstract jigsaws that Schoenberg was writing around this time. The liner notes unnecessarily attack the historic performance movement, making the common error that it insists on fidelity to the score, thus disapproving of Fischer's octave doublings, for example: in fact, what comes across is how disciplined Fischer's playing is compared to more recent performances. This has not so much to do with scholarly argument as with *Zeitgeist*. There is much to be said for both approaches, but there is a certain chill to Fischer's measured belief in civilization when one considers the political situation in the 1930s. This recording should be in every music-lover's library.

We now come to **Telemann**: I always enjoy playing Telemann, and when a disc is superbly performed, as one would expect from Standage's **Collegium Musicum 90**, including Peter Holstag on recorder, Rachel Brown on flute, Anthony Robson and James Eastaway on oboes d'amore, and Mr Standage himself on solo violin, with a good variety of programming of concertos and overtures, it would have given me great pleasure to recommend this disc without hestitation. The fault, however, lies in the texture of the music: in comparison, how Bach's parts gossip to one another! What we really enjoy is a bitchy conversation about our friends, but Telemann is too well-bred, too polite, too urbane, too bourgeois to indulge in that kind of nonsense. The most we can hope for are some holiday snaps, but even these (a little Poland in the violin concerto, for example) show that our guide hasn't bothered to stray from the anodyne recommendations of the state tourist board. And when he gets a bit tipsy on too much Bristol Cream, as in the ***Ouverture ...tragi-comique*** (Chaconne CHAN 0661), and starts telling a joke, when he gets to the punchline about the brothel it becomes quite clear he hasn't understood any of the double-entendres at all. The same Telemann appears in another superbly performed and well-researched disc of two vocal pieces: ***Die Auferstehung*** (cpo 999 643-2) is magnificently performed by the **Magdeburger Kammerchor** and the **Telemann-Kammerorchester Michaelstein** under Ludger Rémy, with particularly clear and bright solos from Dorothee Mields, Britta Schwarz, Andreas Post, Klaus Mertens and Reinhard Decker. This piece, however, is a rather naive and pious view of the Last Judgement: there are few sublime, although a number of fairly pleasant, moments in the music. It is coupled with an oddity: *De Danske, Norske og Tydske Undersaaters Glaede*, a birthday cantata for Frederick V to be performed by the apparently execrable performers at the Christianeum in Altona in 1757. The words in Danish, German and Latin are even worse than the verse found in Hallmark cards, and the music lifts from the level of workaday only once in a while. Imagine being trapped with an aunt who, as well as keeping up with the movement of every minor

royal, also decides to bore you with her recent linguaphone courses, and you have something of the effect!

In England, **William Boyce** was amongst the best composers of his generation. **Collegium Musicum 90** (Simon Standage and Micaela Comberti, violins, Jane Coe, cello and Nicholas Parle, harpsichord) present his twelve published **Trio Sonatas** on two discs (Chandos CHAN 0648(2)). The performances are wonderful, as one would expect from these musicians, and the music has some very fine moments. However, one needs to be a real connoisseur to listen to all these trio sonatas one after the other. More entertaining is the cheekily-titled **Bach's Best Boys** (Signum 97007) by the Belgian group ***Il Gardellino***. Music is by J.C., C.P.E. and W.F. There is a good variety of pieces here: harpsichord solo, flute and oboe sonata, quartet and two quintets. The music is played with polish and the disc is delightfully varied. Finally, the first recording of **Gluck**'s original Italian version of ***Alceste*** (Naxos 8.660066-68, 3 CDs). The performance given by the **Drottningholm Theatre Chorus and Orchestra** under Östman (whose recordings of the da Ponte-Mozart operas were a real revelation) are well-paced and stylish. Teresa Ringholz as Alceste and Justin Lavender as Admeto lead a never-less-than-adequate cast. Even if there are some musical and dramatic weaknesses in this recording, nevertheless all must be congratulated on bringing this masterpiece to disc. As it stands it is one of the purest examples of Classicism in musical history: as the quiet, understated tragedy seems about to unfold, it is all the more telling for being handled with such restraint by both composer and performers.

PH

Chamber Music from the Court of St Petersburg
The Russian Baroque Ensemble
Arte Nova Classics 74321 51626 2 (2CD)

This recording is presented with the words *"Der Barock in Mitteleuropa war um 1740 zum Ende. Interessant daher die zeitliche Verschiebung* [=time lag] *in Russland, um mehr als 50 Jahr ins 19. Jhdt hinein durch z. T. ausländische Musiker, die sich damals in Russland aufhielte."* Yet only one of the composers represented, the ill-starred Maxim Berezovsky, was a native Russian, and only one of the pieces, a violin sonata by the Venetian Luigi Madonis, is in the baroque style. Evidently 'Russian Baroque' is a better name for a Russian 18th-century ensemble than 'La Russie galante', though even that name would exclude the sophisticated classicism of Joseph Starzer and the pre-Romantic freshness and grace of Daniel Steibelt. As for the ensemble itself, little attention has been given to *galant* playing techniques and none at all to the choice of instruments, though gratefully all repeats are taken, even the one that brings the first movement of Anton Ferdinand Titz's *Quartetto G Major* to a full 20 minutes in length. And yet this recording is of considerable interest to anyone in search of new repertory from the period, not just because composers and pieces are so little-known but because of the astonishing quality of most of the music. The introduction by Heidrun Bankosegger, *'Musikleben am St Petersburger Hof im 18. Jahrhundert'*, has but sketchy information about the composers and virtually none whatsoever about the music. In the case of Madonis, we are not told which of the *12 Diverse Sinfonie* Russian Baroque have chosen to play.

The violinist Luigi Madonis was made *Konzertmeister der Hofkapelle* in 1733. Bankosegger refers to his *"Sinfonie, die trotz anderer Bezeichnung deutliche Zeichen einer Suite tragen"*, though the one recorded here is an eloquent sonata in the Corellian vein, to which the extended recitative in the third movement brings an impassioned Venetian touch. Madonis saw to the publication of them - one of the first musical publications in Russia - provided with a dedication to the Tzarina Anna Ivanova.

Joseph Starzer came to Petersburg with the dancer and choreographer Franz Anton Hilverding in 1758. From 1759 to 1764 he wrote the music for a series of ballet entertainments. By 1768 if not earlier he was again in his native Vienna, this time collaborating with the choreographer Noverre. Although the title would suggest an early work - Haydn called his first string quartets *divertimenti* - the 'Divertimento in A Minor' recorded here was written in Vienna in 1775, hence well after his Russian period, and has been unaccountably unpublished. It is a connoisseur's quartet in every sense of the word and a joy to play, bearing affinities of style and in particular dynamic articulation with Mozart's D minor Quartet K421 and with the late string quintets of Michael Haydn. Not only the outer movements but also the trio of the minuet - which is twice as long as the minuet itself - and a good part of the *adagio* are predominantly dark in colouring. Starzer prefers a seamless flow between sections to the rhetorical signposting of transitions, yet the mercurial counterpoint always ready to bend a figure to another purpose, the interpenetration of major and minor, the frequent highlighting of related keys in a way that deliberately falls short of modulation, demand constant attention from the listener. Tom Moore, in his review of these discs published on a Princeton website, writes of it: "The work is in a treble-dominated style, with no concertante interplay for the lower strings." The truth of the matter is that there is almost constant interaction between all the parts, but that not even the first violin plays in what could be described as a *concertante* fashion. There is a lingering effect of consort music in this impressive score, which combines polyphony in the *stile antico* and melodic turns from the Salzburger serenade with the most advanced chamber writing of the 1770s. To say it would hold its own on any imaginable programme of late 18th-century chamber music is quite a tribute to a composer born eight years earlier than Johann Christian Bach.

The G Major Quartet of the *Nürnberger* Anton Ferdinand Titz, on the other hand, is an expansive and thoroughly *concertante* affair. Titz was a violinist who spent time in Vienna before going to Petersburg where he joined the *Hofkapelle* in 1771. Here the writing is resolutely *concertante*, with a cello part whose ebullient virtuosity suggests that Titz's cellist colleague at the *Hofkapelle* was an Italian who also played double bass. Many things about this quartet, including the sheer length of the development in the opening movement and the crystal-clear structural articulations, belong to the same world as the Op.18 quartets of Beethoven. The same cannot be said however of Titz's F Sharp Minor Violin Sonata, one of three from 1795. Here the style is much closer to late Mozart, the formal thinking more compact and resourceful, the expressive content more probing. It is essentially a keyboard sonata with violin

accompaniment elegantly written for the Viennese fortepiano, which is not to say that the violin writing lacks colour and eventfulness. As neither Mozart nor Haydn wrote violin sonatas in the 1780s and 1790s, this sonata by Titz (and one suspects the other two as well) fills or should fill a welcome place in the classical violinist's repertoire. Although, as with another *Frankenländer*, Ignaz Von Beeke (Wimpfen near Heilbronn), the fact that he was not a native-born Austrian may keep him from entering the charmed circle.

The one Russian composer recorded here, Maxim Sozontevich Beresovsky, must have been the most talented student of Francesco Durante during his stay in St Petersburg, for he was later sent to Bologna to continue his studies with Padre Martini at a time when the first Russian landscape and portrait painters were plying their trade there, mostly for Russians on the Grand Tour. By 1773 his *opera seria*, *'Demofoonte'*, was performed in Livorno. 'Leghorn' in the 18th century had an important foreign colony - Bishop Berkeley gave a sermon at the English Church there on his trip to Italy - and it is possible that a noble Russian representing imperial interests in the town took an interest in the 23-year-old composer born in the Ukraine. The lively and good-natured C Major Violin Sonata is in the *Potsdamer Galant* style. The transition between the baroque and the classical was a more gradual affair in and around Berlin than it was in Vienna, and the teenage Beresovsky would have had reams of such stuff to look at in St Petersburg. The performance here is crippling, since the bass line is clearly meant to be doubled (and hence softened) by a cello. The choice of keyboard is less important, though it could be equally well played on fortepiano which, as we know from Zelter's book on Fasch, had largely replaced the harpsichord for everyday use at Potsdam. The closing movement is a minuet with variations, an early example of Beresovsky's liking for flamboyant syncopation, used to good effect in the *'Variations sur un air russe'*. These variations show the results of his study in Italy and were probably written there as a sort of musical introduction to be played in the various salons he visited. Here again the effect is diminished, this time by a modern piano, never mind how discreetly played. Western fortepianists, please claim your own! Beresovsky eventually returned to Russia where he had success with his religious music, as one might expect from a student of Durante whose motets, by the way, stayed in the repertoire of the *Berliner Singakademie* right through the 19th century. He was not a success at court, however, perhaps due to some scandal that led him to take his own life in 1777 at the age of 32. Doubtless if he had lived to become even an average composer of his time, his historical importance in Russia could well have been comparable to that of Roman in Sweden. In particular, our image of Russian music would be radically changed if Beresovsky had left ten or twelve operas, the last of them composed when Glinka was about to go on his own Italian journey. As it is, Russia has an ardent obligation to see all of his music into print and as much of it into church, concert hall and opera house as possible.

Pierre Baillot was the most brilliant violinist of his generation in France, author of an important treatise on playing the violin and a close friend of Luigi Cherubini, who wrote an *adagio* for him entitled *'A mon cher Baillot'*. With his string quartet he gave the first performances of the last three Cherubini quartets. His *'Air russe varié pour le violon avec accompagnement d'un violon, viola et basse'*, however, was written during his Russian tour of 1805-08, thus before Napoleon's disastrous Russian campaign, for the salons of Petersburg and Moscow. One must imagine Baillot standing before his admiring listeners while the other musicians remained seated behind him, providing mainly hushed accompaniment. Their presence rather than that of a fortepianist suggests that Baillot may well have given serious quartet recitals as well for audiences that Anton Titz, who was then still living, had helped to prepare.

Whereas Baillot's variations have but little Russian colouring, the 'Variations' described here as 'on two Russian Folksongs' by Daniel Steibelt have occasional harmonic turns that make them part of a burgeoning Russian tradition, more so than is the case with another excellent German pianist and teacher who found a haven in Petersburg, Adolf Henselt. Steibelt wrote a treatise which has become a major document for fortepiano technique. A 'run in' with Beethoven, known to historians only through Beethoven's publicists, a 'run out' of Paris due to some scandal or other that should provide an added incentive to his first modern biographer when he comes along, led to more than ten years of itinerant concertising, until 1809 when he settled in Petersburg and managed to keep out of trouble there for the last 14 years of his life. He also had the time to compose that had escaped him up to then, and it is likely that the best of Steibert's pieces lie unexplored in Russian archives and collections. The present set of variations was one such. The title is given only in English, which means only in translation, but it is clear that there is only one theme in Steibelt's variations and not two. They are virtuoso variations both in terms of composition and keyboard technique, and can hold their own with similar sets by Dussek and Wölffl, and, for that matter, with the early sets of Beethoven himself, no matter what his modern publicists might say.

The young and talented musicians of Russian Baroque, once they have changed their name and made contact with specialist groups in Western Europe, will I hope all enjoy long and fruitful careers, extending the repertoire and identity of Russian music beyond the boundaries given it in late Tzarist times, sustained and aggravated by a disastrously provincial Soviet regime, which in musicology as in nearly all other areas of Russian life covered the nation in shame. One thing the EU might do to set this right is to open a line of credit to any ensemble or music school wishing to buy a fortepiano.

Tristram Pugin

Fernando Sor
Six Waltzes (1st Set); Les Favourites des Salons; Les Cuirassiers; Six Waltzes (2nd Set); Les Choisies
Josep Maria Roger (fortepiano)
Cantus C9618

'After supper I danced the promised quadrille with her and, never mind how things were, it seemed that an endless happiness came over me, a happiness that grew and grew.'
Leo Tolstoy, *After The Ball*

These three sets of quadrilles by Sor were written in London between 1821 and 1822. They seem to have sold well, and the thought that they may have found their way from the Argyll Rooms out to Jane Austen's house in Winchester is not a far-fetched one. Each of them has a fixed scheme of

five tiny movements, each corresponding to a step or figure: 1) *Figure de pantalon* (after a French comic song: "*Le pantalon / de Madelon / n'a pas de fond*"); 2) *Figure de l'été;* 3) *Figure de la poule;* 4) *Figure de Trénis* (a Gallicisation of the name of the celebrated dancer, Trenitz); 5) *Finale* - after which Sor adds in each case a Waltz, perhaps as a sort of encore before the dancers returned to their places and awaited the next quadrille, the next invitation.... That these pieces were indeed meant for dancing is clear from the breakdown of the steps: five for each of them. Here is the sequence given for the *Figure de la Poule*: 1) *Traversez deux et retraversez;* 2) *Balancez quatre en tenent* [sic] *les mains, demie queue de Chat;* 3) *en avant et en arrière et dos à dos;* 4) *en avant et en arriére quatre et chaîne Anglaise, à vos places*. Just the thing for a French dancing master. But in fact things are not that straightforward - Sor has also provided the single movements with a name of their own. Those in the set called *Les Cuirassiers* run thus: 1) *La Naîve;* 2) *La Coquete* [sic]; 3) *La Campagnarde;* 4) *L'Elégante;* 5) *La Chasse* - followed by *Waltz de Les* [sic] *Cuirassiers.* These names are in the tradition of baroque *pièces de clavecin*, only here there is no polyvalent 'la' (e.g. *La Poplinière*) - all except of course *La Chasse* - are *portraits de femmes* of which perhaps the most exquisite is *La Dessapointée* [sic] from the set called *Les choisies*. This tends to support Colin Lawson's assertion that "these dances date from a period when pieces of this type came to be listened to as well as danced to." (For my part I think 'it was always so', and cannot imagine that the books of keyboard *balli* by Gastoldi and others, published in Venice in the 16th century, were not often played alone or in intimate company for the sole pleasure of hearing them.) Though even played as house music they would have called up recollections of the dance to everyone present.

Hummel's *Apollo-Saal Walzer* would seem to be the first published chain of waltzes. These by Sor do not make up a chain since there are no *enchaînements* between them. But the question remains, are they meant to be a sequence rather than a collection? For the waltz step, while remaining essentially the same, could be slowed down or speeded up to accommodate the successive *tempi* of individual pieces. I think they are, first because Sor or his editor uses the word 'set' to describe the quadrille sequences as well (in fact there is piece for string orchestra by an American neoclassic composer of the mid-20th century, Herbert Haufrecht, based on square-dance rhythms and significantly called *Square Set*), and second, because the concluding waltzes in all five sets have an *allure de finale* about them. J M Roger must not have been convinced of that since he changes about both sets, though his instinct prompted him to leave the finale of the second set where it was. It is presumptuous to change the order of pieces established by a composer when those pieces are clearly meant to be played all together. Even if one makes the risky assumption that it was not 'Sor' to order the waltzes, it is no less presumptuous to change the order of pieces given them by a contemporary editor - in this case, an editor with an eye to their effectiveness in a dance hall. Early music specialists should know better than this, even if their run-of-the-mill-repertory-oriented colleagues, who feel half-naked without the make-up of *Steigerungstechnik*, still do not. Fortunately a computerised CD player allows one to restore the proper order.

The quadrille promised to the ecstatic Ivan Vassilyevich in Tolstoy's tale *After The Ball* was danced in Kazan in the 1840s, seemingly far from the Argyll Rooms in the days of Jane Austen, but one must not forget that Sor stayed on for three years in Russia (1823-26) after being invited there to direct his ballet *Cendrillon*, which had been chosen for the opening of the new Bolshoi Theatre. Now just before that quadrille with the military commander's daughter, the musicians play a mazurka, and as it happens that is exactly what Josep Maria Roger does here. The source given for Sor's mazurka is the appropriately-titled *Encyclopédie pittoresque de la musique* of Adolphe Ledhuy, brought out in Paris in 1835. It is surely one of the most Polish of mazurkas to be written by a non-Slav, not perhaps surprising from this Catalan whose *seguidillas boleras* are closer to the *Cancioniero* of Felipe Pedrell than to anything by his contemporaries. Sor was not a man of single style, though he lived in a time when he was unable to take full advantage of it as he would have done in baroque or modern times.

Now what about these pieces in general - and in particular their importance for dance miniatures and dance sequences to come? However aristocratic in spirit the baroque dance suite had been - something that in no way excluded from it a genuine taste for pastorale, quite the contrary - what had become ballroom dances by the time of the Congress of Vienna were imbued with the spirit of early Romanticism, and as such unaffectedly life-enhancing. (The *Walzer* as a symbol of decadence comes to be only in the aftermath of the 'Fall of the House of Hapsburg'. Richard Strauss in *Der Rosenkavalier* would associate the *Wiener Walzer* with the plebianising goatishness of Baron Ochs rather than with the more subtle eroticism of the Marschallin or with the earnestness of the young lovers Octavian and Sophie, but this is a result of placing the *Walzer* back in a rococo and hence pre-revolutionary context. The effect of this on the symbolic plane is less anachronistic than most critics suggest.)

Politically-oriented criticism tries to distinguish a *Biedermeier* tendency, supposedly a smug indulgence in middle-class feelings, and a *Vormärz* tendency, supposedly involved in the emancipation of people (and peoples, which is where the mazurka fits in, and doubtless many another dance from the *Encyclopédie pittoresque*) with, in Germany at least, a good dose of *antihöfische Agitation* thrown in. (Heine's tendentious *De l'Allemagne* is a major source of this error. Heine was anti-Catholic, anti-monarchist and his notion of the Middle Ages had not got much beyond that of the *encyclopédistes*. For this reason he was all too happy to sort Brentano, Tieck, von Arnim and the medievalising Goethe into the reactionary camp, and to warn the French literary establishment off them. With an intent to counter the quite different valuations of Mme de Staël who did so much to encourage the rise of an independent Romantic school in France.) But in terms of musical style the distinction does not hold. Even the liberally-minded Schumann, who based the first version of the libretto for his *Genoveva* on the turbulent problem play of Friedrich Hebbel, author as well of the *bürgerliche Tragödie, Maria Magdalena*, only to rework it in keeping with the fairytale atmosphere of *Leben und Tod der heiligen Genoveva* of Ludwig Tieck, reflects no such distinction in his dance sequences. He even had to slip in the *Marseillaise* to make clear what the *Faschungsschwanck aus Wien* was powerless to do without it.

On the other hand, such dances had erotic significance aplenty — in the main of a non-licentious kind - though enough to make a scrupulous composer like Mendelssohn do his best to avoid them, something that his more spontaneously-minded sister might not have done after her marriage had she lived on to compose 'away from home'. (Wilhelm Hensel, Fanny's South German husband, was rather more interested in furthering her career than her liberally-minded Berliner family. But then he was himself a painter.) A perfect example of this is the waltz aria *Höchste Lust ist treues Lieben* from *Die drei Pintos*, an early Weber opera left unfinished and later completed by Mahler, the more indicative since it was admired by Richard Strauss. In it Laura, the lady-in-waiting of the heroine Clarissa, sings of the joys of true love to comfort her mistress, whose father is attempting to marry her to the loutish son of his best friend while she, Clarissa, yearns for the gallant Dom Gomez de Freiros. To further complicate - or clarify - matters, both suitors are from the cream of the Spanish nobility, whilst the very name Clarissa was made popular in France and Germany by Richardson's decidedly middle-class novel. And, without a doubt, dancing the waltz, the mazurka or the quadrille was perfectly in keeping with a figure like Königin Luise von Preußen, mother of Friedrich IV, whom the historian Heinrich Treitschke was later, in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, to extoll as *die bürgerliche Königin* - in part because she did things against ceremonial, like taking little girls up in her arms to kiss them during official court receptions. (In fact, as a girl in the 1790s, she had once helped Goethe's mother with the housework, though I have always wondered how many servants there were in that big house in Frankfurt.)

But Sor has a special significance, due to the role he played in bringing intimate poetry to the keyboard dance miniature, and it should not surprise us that he did so in part through his love of the French baroque *portrait de femme*. His dances are occasionally suggestive of one of Schumann's principal sources in this, Daniel Gottlob Türk, who surely knew Sor's music if he did not actually use it for teaching purposes. Schubert's dances, for all their poignant inventiveness, remain closer to the contradance in spirit. Though when we arrive at the artful simplicity of Schumann's *Kinderball* it is almost as if we have come, if not full circle, then to the same point in the gently-spiralling career of Romantic *Hausmusik* as that where Türk and Sor are found.

Tristram Pugin

Fortepiano plus

Hummel
Quintet Op 87; Trio Op 12; Viola Sonata Op 5 No 3
The Music Collection
ASV CD GAU 210

I highly recommend this disc. It goes a long way towards reinstating Hummel as one of the major composers of chamber music at the turn of the 19th century. Each of the three works presented here was written early in the composer's career, but all display an instinctive grasp of their genres, allied to the composer's already remarkable musical personality. They are given excellent performances from The Music Collection, a group of musicians with the fortepianist Susan Alexander-Max at its centre. For this recording Alexander-Max worked with Micaela Comberti, Gustav Clarkson, Pal Banda and Caroline Maguire. I raise only one objection: why was the decision taken to use an Erard piano for the Quintet and Trio - an instrument which dates from about 40-odd years after the music was written? The double bass in the Quintet mainly reinforces the bottom of the texture, so Hummel himself thus compensated for any lack of 'balance' or 'power'. The recording of the viola sonata features a Derek Adlam reproduction of a Viennese fortepiano exactly contemporary in date with all these compositions, and this performance, with some outstandingly beautiful playing from Clarkson and Alexander-Max, works best of all the pieces on the disc. This is not to say that the employment of the Erard necessarily distorts the performances of the other two works overmuch; the musicians are too experienced for that. But it does mean that this listener, at least, was left wondering how it all would have sounded on the Viennese fortepiano.

Chopin
Mazurkas I
Patrick Cohen
Glossa GCD 920506 (2 CDs)

Normally I bemoan the 'dictionary' approach to recording, that is, the wish to record all of so-and-so's suites on one disc, all their **cantatas** on another, and so on. With Chopin's Mazurkas, however, the case is somewhat different. A number of different styles of folk-dance came to inspire what was given the general euro-label 'Mazurka'. In addition, Chopin developed the genre over time, from simpler dance-like pieces to longer poetic musings. In other words, the mazurkas on these two discs, taking us from op. 6 (1830) to op. 41 (1839), are more than varied enough to hold our attention in a complete listening. They are played with excellent restraint by Patrick Cohen on an Erard of about 1855. Of all the music on disc I have heard recently, these little masterpieces are the most haunting. An excellent release.

PH

To order back copies, please complete the form below.

Vol 6 no 2
* Pamela Nash on Jane Chapman (part one)
* Peter Watchorn on Isolde Ahlgrimm in Vienna
* interviews with Olga Tverskaya and Sharona Joshua
* Claudio di Véroli on Argentina
* Philip Pickett on the Brandenburg Concertos
* Carl Sloane on Handel's temperament

Vol 6 no 1
* Penelope Cave on Violet Gordon Woodhouse
* Martha Goodway on fortepiano kapsels
* interviews with Richard Egarr and Kenneth Weiss
* Claudio di Véroli on Couperin
* Gwilym Beechey on Handel's Eight Great Suites for Harpsichord
* Martin Robertson on humidity

...Limited numbers of Volume 5 (nos. 1, 2 and 3) are also available.

Never miss out again!

Keep up-to-date with the early keyboard world by subscribing to *Harpsichord & Fortepiano.*

Subscription Details

UK: £12.00 subs direct from the publisher

US: $24.00, cheques only to Magnamusic Distrihutors Inc. PO Box 338, Amenia Union Road, Saron CT 06069

Austra1ia: A$30.00, credit cards or chequs to: Harpsichord & Fortepiano, Elmtree Lane, Chewton, Victoria 3451, Australia

France: FFl25,00 Franc cheques payable to: J J Burbidge, at the publisher's address

Germany: DM36.25, credit card preferred. Subscribe through publisher

Japan: Y2400, credit card preferred. Subscribe through publisher

Rest of World: £12.00. Lpease send payment in pounds sterling, or send credit card.details direct to the publisher.

I would like to subscribe to Harpsichord & Fortepiano

Name .....

Address.....

.....

Tel.....

Please also send me the following back copies (£6 each)

.....