Harpsichord & fortepiano

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RECORDINGS

Instruments of the Russell Collection, Volume II
John Kitchen
Delphian DCD34039
Reviewed by David Pickett

Together with a complementary volume issued five years ago, this CD gives a good overview of the historical keyboard instruments in the Raymond Russell Collection at the University of Edinburgh. It would be redundant to describe this well known collection here, and readers are referred to www.music.ed.ac.uk/russell.

The performer, John Kitchen, is highly active both at the University and in the City of Edinburgh and has had more opportunity to familiarise himself with the instruments than most players. These instruments include the Goermans-Taskin double harpsichord, which many prefer to the more famous Taskin of 1769 that lives alongside it in the museum, though in saying so one must admit to an embarrassment of riches in the context. The same is even more true of the collection's extensive list of English instruments, of which we hear here a fine example that its builder, Robert Falkener, ascribed unashamedly on its faceplate to Kirckman. Despite his falsification, Falkener deserves to be remembered as a fine builder in his own right, as this performance of a Handel Suite in D minor demonstrates. There are two bentside spinets, one attributed to John Player and the other to John Harrison, but, in some senses, perhaps the most interesting performance is that of the 7th Toccata by Michelangelo Rossi on an enharmonic virginal attributed to Francesco Poggio (Florence c.1620). Kitchen plays the well known chromatic excursions more deliberately than usual, but expressively, in an interpretation that is itself worth the price of the disc.

A German harpsichord by Hass, Hamburg 1764, is demonstrated by parts of Graupner's *November* Partita, and the procession of instruments also includes a chamber organ from c.1680, a Hubert clavichord and a square piano made by the Edinburgh builder Andrew Rochead. All of these receive appropriate and well-played selections of music. The recording is clear and well-balanced, and is accompanied by a handsome booklet with colour pictures of each instrument.

In recognising that the instruments are the stars of this recording and its companion, one is grateful to have them demonstrated by such a fine musician as John Kitchen. A player cannot make a poor instrument sound better than it really is, though the hands of a lesser player can make the work of a great builder sound incompetent. This is highly recommended to all with an interest in original instruments.

George Frederic Handel: Organ Concertos.
Paul Nicholson, organ; with Frances Kelly, (Op 4 No 6) members of
The Choir of Clare College, Cambridge (Timothy Brown, director),
The Brandenburg Consort, (Roy Goodman, conductor)
Hyperion CDD22052.
Reviewed by Gregory Crowell

There is no great shortage of recordings of the Handel organ concertos, so any new recording, if it is to make any impression at all in an already notable field, must offer not only superior musicianship, but also something that has not been previously captured on disc as well. This recording goes a long way towards achieving both.

In 1957 the English-American organist E. Power Biggs recorded some of these concertos on a chamber organ built in 1749 for Handel's friend and librettist Charles Jennens; the instrument is now located in the Parish Church of St. James in Great Packington, Warwickshire. (Valiant as this early attempt at historically-informed performance was, an unfortunate consequence of the project was that the pipes of the organ were shortened to accommodate the pitch of the modern oboes.) Curiously, few recordings since Biggs' have made a serious attempt to present these works on a suitably colourful, English instrument. For this disc Paul Nicholson has chosen just such an organ in the Goetze & Gwynn instrument in the church of St. Lawrence, Whitchurch. Although a few parts of the original organ by Mark Anthony Dallam from 1715 survive (including the case and front pipes), the organ as it stands is essentially a modern instrument in 18th-century English style. Its delightfully sparkling, but never searing ensemble, tart and quinty basses, and round flutes prove to be the perfect medium for these concertos. Indeed, the Sesquialtera/ Cornet stop produces a nearly seamless blend with the gut-strung strings, as in the final movement of the Op. 4, No. 4 concerto.

The programme booklet informs us that the organ is tuned according to a temperament designed by Mark Lindley especially for the music of Handel.

The performance lacks no degree of sparkle, either; Nicholson's facility and appropriately daring ornamentation recreate the sense of excitement that must have accompanied these concertos when they were first featured as virtuoso diversions between sections of Handel's oratorios. The faster movements generally come off better than the slow movements, and occasionally the performer has curiously missed an opportunity to imitate the strings instruments' articulations, as in the echo-like exchange in the concluding Andante of the Op. 4, No. 1 concerto. The delightful ground bass that concludes the Op. 7, No. 5 concerto, however, is particularly well played, and the performance even boasts very judicious use of the swell pedal, a device known in England since 1712, when Abraham Jordan Sr. and his son incorporated it into their large organ for St. Magnus the Martyr, London.

Rounding out this recording are a few bonuses that make it an easy choice over many other versions of these works on disc. These include the choral conclusion provided by Handel for the Op. 4, No. 4 concerto (sung here by members of the organ of Clare College, Cambridge), and a refined performance of the Op. 4, No. 6 concerto on harp by Frances Kelly. Excellent liner notes and fine recorded sound complete the package, making for a disc with which future recordings surely will have to contend.

***Thomas Arne: Six Favourite Concertos.* Paul Nicholson, organ, harpsichord, and fortepiano, The Parley of Instruments Baroque Orchestra under the direction of Paul Nicholson.**
Helios CDH55251.
Reviewed by Gregory Crowell

Contents: ***Harpsichord Concerto in C major; Organ Concerto in G major; Piano Concerto in A major; Organ Concerto in B flat major; Harpsichord Concerto in G minor; Piano Concerto in B flat major***

Thomas Arne (1710–1778) is a familiar figure to most musicians, but the appearance of his name in nearly microscopic print on the cover of this compact disc is perhaps a symptom of how little cachet his name may hold for the average consumer. This is certainly a shame, for the works presented on this disc give ample evidence of a composer with an inventive, at times arresting, musical voice that deserves to be heard.

Published as a collection well after Arne's death, *Six Favourite Concertos* contains works that were no doubt composed over many decades. As such, they display a wide range of notable influences, from Handel, Corelli, and Vivaldi, to the French opera overture and the works of J.S. Bach's sons. No one will mistake Arne's works for mere imitations; however; at every turn there are delightful surprises that keep the listener's attention and invite repeated hearings. Concerto No. 1, for example, begins as a charming baroque romp, but is soon given over to a rather well constructed fugue for solo keyboard, followed by a delightful set of variations that are quite unexpectedly usurped at the finish line by a royal invasion of trumpets and drums. Concerto No. 6 surprises with a dreamily free ranging fantasia for solo keyboard not unworthy of Arne's contemporary, C.P.E. Bach.

Any recording of these works would be worthy of attention, but Paul Nicholson has done them a particularly fine turn with his fleet, witty performances. Of special note are the instruments chosen for this recording, which include a bold and colorful Kirckman harpsichord from 1778 (the year of Arne's death), and a marvelous fortepiano by Michael Cole after Americus Backers (London, 1772); the latter instrument, with sonorities ranging from pearly purity to raspy rattles, suits this music to perfection. Throughout Nicholson meets the virtuoso demands of these works with evocative and persuasive playing, presenting a composer whose own instrumental works were eclipsed even during his lifetime by his works for the theatre, but who nevertheless deserves to stand not too far in the shadows of his more famous contemporaries.

Parthenia: English Harpsichord Music
David Ponsford, harpsichord
Riverrun Records 61 57'43"
Reviewed by Robert Haskins

The premise of this new release is that *Parthenia* was meant to be understood as a cycle of pieces, a unified musical experience whose content and ordering made appropriate references for the delight of its dedicatees–

Princess Elizabeth Stuart and Frederick V, the Elector Palatine of Heidelberg– on the occasion of their wedding. Janet Pollack's thought provoking liner notes suggest that the selection of pieces evokes images of reconciliation (for instance, the sequence of pavans and galliards dedicated to a Catholic and a Protestant, respectively). But *Parthenia*'s three-fold division also provides evidence that the work was a kind of musical *epithalmium*, or wedding poem, popular in Jacobean England. Epithalmia, Pollack explains, can evoke the past by honouring past luminaries or venerable wedding practices; she sees evidence of both in the inclusion of pieces dedicated to famous people and in the inclusion of the somewhat older contrapuntal style represented by Gibbons's *Fantazia in Foure parts*. She even offers a plausible explanation for the placement of a prelude as *Parthenia*'s final item: the reminder that the married couple will begin a new life together.

These are all tantalizing ideas, very appealing to those who like to hear their music as contributing poetically and evocatively to a rich social and historical context. And after hearing the recording I must say that *Parthenia* does indeed work very well as unified collection. David Ponsford is accomplished as both an organist and harpsichordist. He is a sensitive and imaginative player, and brings a sober and poignant sensibility to the pavans that I think is just right. His sense of phrasing and articulation is very good too, aided in no small measure by his extensive reliance on historical fingerings. Here and there I want the galliards, in particular, to move more quickly so as to make more of an effective contrast with the preceding pavan. And while I commend him for creating his own divisions for those pieces that lack their own ornamented repeats (as in *Byrd's Earl of Salisbury* pavan), some of the elaborations sound more like those of later music. Still, I have to grant that performers of earlier times were probably not so bound to the text as we are today, and that we could all benefit from a more creative engagement with the music; Ponsford offers many instructive examples worthy of emulation.

The only other complete recording of *Parthenia* that I know is one by Mary Jane Newman on Centaur 2493; I found her recording exciting for its virtuosity, but I felt that her performance of the pavans –especially Byrd's– really failed to probe deeply into their mysterious, serious affect. She also diminished the effect of experiencing the collection as a unified grouping by including an uproarious performance of Byrd's *The Battell*; I can't imagine another piece that could carry me away from the emotional world of *Parthenia* so completely. And Newman doesn't have available the wonderful instruments that Ponsford plays: a harpsichord by Andrew Garlick after Andreas Ruckers (1644, Vleeshuis, Antwerp), one by Colin Booth after Italian makers, and a muselar virginal by Malcolm Greenhalgh after J. Couchet (1650, Vleeshuis, Antwerp). The pitch is A = 396 and the meantone temperament (by Greenhalgh) is wonderful. The sound quality is very natural –not overproduced– which allows me to enjoy the timbre of these fine instruments almost as well as if I were playing them myself.

François Francoeur: Amans, voulez-vous être heureux?
Ausonia: Isabelle Desrochers, soprano, Mira Glodeanu, violin, Nils Wieboldt, cello, James Munro, violone and string bass, Julian Behr, theorbo, Frédérick Haas, harpsichord and director.
Alpha 076
Reviewed by Beth Garfinkel

Contents: Sonate en mi mineur pour violon & basse continue (Ile livre), *Fureur, Amour, secondés mon impatience* (from *Scanderberg*), Sonate en La majeur pour violon & basse continue (Ile livre), *L'Amour fait naÓtre nos desires* (from *Pirame & Tisbé*), *Loin de nos cúurs les tristes plaints* (*Scanderberg*), *Vole de victoire en victoire* (from a Cantatille pour une Thessalienne), *Splendete, luci belle* (*Scanderberg*), Sonate en ré mineur pour violon & basse continue (Ile livre), *Que dance ce séjour, nos transports paroissent* (from *Tarsis & Zélie*), *Lance tes traits, Amour*; *D'un tendre Amour, ne craignez rien*; *Amans, voulez-vous Ítre heureux* (*Pirame & Tisbé*)

Where does one begin to describe a recording such as Ausonia's compilation of the music of François Francúur, *Amans, voulez-vous Ítre heureux?* The phrase ìembarrassment of riches" comes to mind. First of all, the music of Francúur itself deserves to be much better known. Francoeur and his friend FranÁois Rebel (the son of Jean-Féry Rebel) collaborated on the composition of three operas, *Pirame & Tisbé* (1726), *Tarsis & Zélie* (1728), and *Scanderberg* (1735). The recording contains excerpts from all three works.

These selections of theatrical music are supremely theatrical and supremely French (or supremely Italian, depending on the language of the lyrics) at the same time, expressing many different moods, within the bounds of the musical resources available for this recording — soprano, violin, and continuo. Particularly delightful are the two arias from Scanderberg, *Fureur, amour*, full of emotional bravura ably represented by the virtuoso violin obligato, and *Splendete, luci belli*, so brilliantly Italianate that it would not disgrace an opera by Handel. The sonatas for solo violin are also worthy additions to the repertoire, making use of piquant dissonances, lush double and triple stops, Corellian counterpoint, and quintessentially French charm and freshness.

This is also a good description of the playing. All the players seem to capture the nuances of the music, including ornamentation, phrasing, *notes inégales*, diction, and intonation. At the same time, the players take all these details in stride, so that the effect is not one of fussiness, but rather of red blooded vigor. First, Isabelle Desrochers has captured the trick of making dynamic inflections (lifts and swells) and ornaments without letting them interrupt the music, and her diction and coloratura are impeccable. In addition, her voice fits Charles de Brosses's description of the 18th-century opera star Catherine Lemaure: "so round, so full and velvety, so sonorous." (Charles de Brosses, *Lettres familières*, quoted in *Readings in the History of Music in Performance*, ed. Carol MacClintock (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1979), 275.)

All this is equaled by Mira Glodeanu's playing on the violin: she has performed the rare feat of applying the phrasing of the French language to the violin. Soloists and accompanists alike show a wide expressive range, from tenderness to boiling rage with well chosen articulations and arpeggiation. In short, this recording is highly recommended, particularly for anyone who wants to know how good French Baroque performances should sound.

***Francois Couperin Keyboard Music – 3*, Angela Hewitt, piano: Hyperion CDA67520**
Reviewed by David Pickett

Contents: *Book III Treizième Ordre: Les Lis naissans; Les Rozeaux; L'Engageante; Les Folies françoises, ou Les Dominos; L'¬me-en-peine; Book III Quatorzième Ordre: Le Rossignol-en-amour; La Linote-éfarouchée; Les Fauvétes plaintives; Le Petit-rien; Book I Deuxième Ordre: Les Idées heureuses; Book III Quinzième Ordre: Le Dodo, ou L'Amour au Berçeau; Book II Dixième Ordre: La Mézangère; Book III Dix-neuvième Ordre: La Muse-Plantine; Book I Quatrième Ordre: Le Réveil-matin; Book I Troisième Ordre: La Favorite; La Lutine; Book III Seizième Ordre: La Distraite; L'Himen-amour; Book II Septième Ordre: La Ménetou*

Francois Couperin lived 1668-1733, publishing his four volumes of *Pièces de clavecin* in 1713, 1716, 1722 and 1730. Unlike Domenico Scarlatti or J. S. Bach, both of whom wrote keyboard compositions a few years later, Couperin probably never heard a fortepiano or a clavichord. Thus his works were written with the expectation of performance on the "inexpressive" harpsichord, as opposed to the Steinway that Angela Hewitt plays here. One is bound to wonder for whom this and previous Couperin recordings by Hewitt are intended. Surely not for someone for whom Liszt and Rachmaninov are more typical fare, and probably not for those who have already heard them on the harpsichord. Against this, we should recall that Brahms collaborated with Chrysander in making the first modern edition (1888), and presumably he played the works on the piano of his day. But would one seriously entertain a recital of the organ works of Henry Purcell or John Stanley on London's Albert Hall organ today? The piano has 88 keys, approximately 20 of which were not available to Couperin, and quite a few more were scarcely ever used. The tone colour of the piano is not as varied as the harpsichord which, with its two 8-foot registers and a 4-foot register has a richer overtone structure; playing a repeat *pianissimo* the second time around is a change of level on the piano, but essentially the same colour. (We will not talk about equal temperament.) I should declare my own preference for the harpsichord; but why not play them on fortepiano, which is less of an anachronism than the modern Steinway?

The chosen repertoire includes the whole of the *13me Ordre*; but the vast majority of the time is given over to a selection of "the most interesting and most suitable to performance on the modern piano." The piano playing is indeed excellent, as is the recorded sound; but the question is whether this is good Couperin. Let us admit that it is a transcription: the voices are rebalanced, at one point obvious variety of colour is obtained by transposing up an octave,

and there are many more subtle adjustments. Sometimes, as in *La Lutine*, one is reminded of Scarlatti, whose music has long been in the repertoire of pianists; but ultimately, as with Glenn Gould's Bach transcriptions, the question just posed is probably best left unanswered.

Angela Hewitt's programme notes are extensive and informative, quoting from Couperin himself: "The harpsichord is perfect with regard to its compass and its brilliance; but as one can neither swell nor diminish the sound, I am always grateful to those who, by an art sustained by taste, are able to render the instrument susceptible to expression." Indeed, in one of the pieces, *Le Rossignol-en-amour*, he recommends the flute as an expressive alternative. Hewitt usually avoids the continual ìhairpin effect" that can become very tedious in baroque music, though sometimes the pianistic phrasing serves detrimentally to emphasize the music's short and regular periodic structure.

As an expressive tool, unlike the harpsichord, the piano offers the opportunity to change the balance of the voices; though it seems in many cases that had Couperin wanted this he might well have composed a piece differently. For instance, all bass notes are here much softer than they would be on the harpsichord; their full effect is missing from *Les Idées heureueses*, and the effect of those cadences which end with the low octave in the bass is consistently softened. Similarly, the off beat notes in the tenor register of several passages of *La Mézangère* are almost totally suppressed. This reinforces the impression of a texture dominated by the right hand —which the harpsichord avoids.

One consequence of the brighter tone of the instrument for which Couperin wrote is the lower tessitura of many of the pieces. When a melody inhabits the tenor octave, as in *Le Dodo* or *La Ménetou*, it sounds quite natural on the harpsichord; on the piano, as here, it gives the impression of a female voice with an unusually low tessitura and almost verges on the ridiculous.

Although the harpsichord is often conventionally thought by non-players to sound similar to a musical box, I find this description more apt to the white-toned piano played here, rather than to the gutsy harpsichord timbre that Couperin would have expected. A good example is *La Linote éfarouchée*, in which the low octaves of the left hand are almost completely suppressed, as cannot happen with the harpsichord. Couperin specifies *Légérement*, but the piano take this to extremes that are unattainable with the harpsichord. This tendency to soften the edge and thin out the texture by pianistic means imparts to the music a Satie-like —almost New Age— character and ultimately a monotony of tone that Couperin surely did not anticipate. Playing Couperin on the piano certainly extends the instrument's repertoire, but since the music is rendered less arresting in its new surroundings, one wonders whether it will be listened to very intently.

Pierre Hantaï, *Scarlatti Sonatas vol. 3*
Harmonia Mundi Mirare CD MIR007 2005

Richard Lester, *Twenty Three Sonatas from The Complete Keyboard Works of Domenico Scarlatti 1685-1757, Played on Harpsichord, Fortepiano and Organ vol 17 only Privilege Accord PA12517 2005*
www.the-scarlatti-experience.co.uk
The entire set is being reissued in 6 volume sets by Nimbus Records from September 2006 www.wyastone.co.uk

Reviewed by Meg Cotner

This summer I have had the pleasure to listen to two recent recordings of Domenico Scarlatti's keyboard sonatas, one by Pierre Hantaï and the other by Richard Lester. Each disc has its own unique offerings – in both sound and word – and I am here to introduce you to these delights.

Scarlatti's 555 harpsichord sonatas are some of the most challenging of the baroque keyboard repertoire. Every harpsichord student studies them, as do pianists, although according to Hantaï, "...the modern piano does rather smooth the rough edges of this repertoire, and the demonic effects you often find in it lose much of their meaning." Listening to these recordings makes me want to sit down and play through as many of these sonatas as I can, they are so engaging and full of fierce and tender beauty.

Pierre Hantaï's recording has been beautifully produced by the French early music label Mirare. On it, he plays an Italian instrument built in 2002 by Philippe Humeau. Richard Lester's recording, on the Privilège Accord label out of the UK, has a more "home-grown" feel to it compared to Hantaï's recording, which is not necessarily a bad thing in my mind. Lester plays a Portuguese

harpsichord built (no date given) by Michael Cole. The instruments sounds quite different from each other: Hantaï's instrument has an incredibly resonant bass and a mellifluous top register, with just enough of a rough edge to be assertive in its own right. Lester's instrument, while also assertive in tone, sounds a bit rougher around the edges overall, less refined and more like the Portuguese instruments I've heard in the past.

Hantaï and Lester come from different places with regard to their overall concept of recording these pieces. Lester is on a mission to record all 555 sonatas, while Hantai simply feels there is no justification for recording the entire *oevre* of a composer. In his words, "The performer must choose, and choose the best [sonatas]." This quote comes from a short interview with Hantai at the end of each section of his authored program notes in the CD. In contrast, musicologist and Scarlatti expert W. Dean Sutcliffe wrote the bulk of Lester's program notes, which are very informative, especially since more than half of the sonatas Lester plays are from unpublished manuscripts.

In my eyes, these unpublished pieces are the most enticing aspect of Lester's recording. It is exciting to think of having "new" music by Scarlatti, blasting the less-than accurate 555 number (Kirkpatrick combined two of the sonatas into 204a and 204b so that the total number would be more memorable) to new heights. Although some of the sonatas are not absolutely convincing as being penned by Scarlatti, I would agree with the notes that the Sonata in A (track 15) from the Lisbon *Libro di tocate* is one of the most convincingly Scarlatti's, as is the D Minor Sonata (track 19) from Valladolid Cathedral. Both sonatas are full of energy and interest harmonically. Lester plays them with the vigorous care one would with truly "new" music, and it must have been a thrill for him to present these intriguing pieces alongside more well-known works.

Hantaï's recording also contains a number of well-known and popular sonatas, hand-picked by himself, and with respect to his comments, they are perhaps the best ones in his eyes. Sonatas K.517 and K.27, two favorites of mine, are played beautifully, K.27 with its tender moderato and K.517 with its incredibly fiery presto. Hantaï expertly brings out the lyrical line of suspensions in K.27 that is so often hidden in amongst the moving notes, at times almost sounding gamba-like; simply beautiful. And I don't think I've ever heard K.517 played faster or with more restrained exuberance.

The one sonata that the two recordings share is K.146, one of Scarlatti's most famous. Both players use time for expressiveness to their advantage, but at different times. I can't but help hear a bit of "Frenchness" in Hantaï's playing, due to his use of staggering and overholding. Lester's approach is more straightforward, simply letting it rip sometimes. He is more straightforward in his playing, and at times this creates more forward motion than Hantaï might allow. The recording quality does make an impact, Hantaï's recording sounding more immediate and present whereas Lester's in comparison sounds like more at a distance. Lester's harpsichord also has two pedals (one operating the harp, used in K.97, and the other engaging the 8'), which according to his notes, allows the player to make some semblance of dynamics by gradually adding or subtracting a register. He uses this effect in K.146, quite a different approach from Hantaï.

In the end, both recordings each provide a little over an hour of aural Scarlatti goodness. Lester's is fascinating in his inclusion of unpublished sonatas, providing great discovery for the listener. Hantaï's recording reflects his taste and particular interest in Scarlatti's sonatas. Both players bring great understanding and artistry to their performances on beautifully assertive italianate instruments. And there's no doubt that both of them are virtuoso players. It's difficult to say if one is better than the other, so I won't; both recordings bring much to the musical table.

Soler, Sonatas, vol. 11
Gilbert Rowland, harpsichord
Naxos CD 8.557640 78'
Reviewed by Patrick Frye III

The eleventh installation of the large output of sonatas for harpsichord by Padre Antonio Soler (1729-1783), performed by eminent Scots harpsichordist, Gilbert Rowland (born 1946), showcases not only an exceptional group of works, but also a high quality recording. A Flemish double harpsichord from the Paris Workshop was tuned and prepared by Andrew Wooderson, and the recording was at Epson College Concert Hall in Surrey, England, in July 2004.

The recording exemplifies the Spanish Soler in many keys: C major, E minor, A minor, D major, B-flat major, and two totally amazing sonatas in the quite distant key of D-flat major—

one that runs over 11 ½ minutes paired by a second that runs 7 ¼!

I suggest this recording for anyone that is either a new acquaintance to the music of Soler or one who knows his efforts well. As a more budget-priced compact disc, it makes the whole set less a daunting possibility to purchase. The performance is exciting, engaging and never over-the-top. Rowland is distinguished by his colorful choice of stops and dynamic reading of the music. It is possibly a bit more restrained than I might have wished, but this is really a matter of choice —to demonstrate the music with best foot forward, or to show its Rococco "decadence" and allure with possibly debatable manner and historical connection. I was quite astounded by the two D-flat sonatas, especially the first with its modulations and dotted rhythms. Even before I read the liner notes, my mind was brought to Schubert as D-flat is in itself an amazing key to use successfully for such a long duration. Rowland performs deftly and with ease that shows his mastery of Soler's music—he is obviously a performer who is knowledgeable of the material at an exceptional level. Never does he fall into a simplistic approach and his performance is always optimistic and thoroughly gripping.

Although the Naxos package is polished, well made, and includes good liner notes by Rowland about Soler and the sonatas, there is little specific information about the microphones or recording techniques used. Personally, hearing this volume of Soler sonatas has made me want all the others that are completed and I await the ones to come that will finish the Padre's tome.

Schubert: Die schöne Müllerin
Jan Kabow, tenor; Kristian Bezuidenhout, fortepiano
Atma 2315 60'58"
Reviewed by Robert Haskins

In addition to excellent notes by the Schubert scholar Susan Youens, the artists write a brief essay that poses the reasonable question whether or not the world needs another recording of *Die schöne Müllerin*. They answer in the affirmative, of course, and as their justification propose that a musical score is not so much a "definitive indication of exactly which notes are to be played" as it is "a more flexible entity, a "script" of gestures that requires personal interpretation". I can well remember my first experience of Schubert's cycle on record: the very judicious Gérard Souzay, accompanied by Dalton Baldwin. Not long after, I discovered Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau's recording with Gerald Moore. Both artists brought a scrupulous respect for the composers in their work. Kabow and Bezuidenhout are respectful, too, but take for granted that the performer's contribution is one of active creativity – much as Schubert the composer also gave many first performances of his own works. Kobow adds ornaments and on occasion takes a few notes away so that Schubert's line is simpler, more direct. Bezuidenhout arpeggiates chords frequently, adds many ornaments, and makes other adjustments as well. I should point out, however, that these liberties are never done capriciously, but always seem to respond to a poetic idea in Müller's texts. One of the most interesting examples is the opening of *"Mit dem grünen Lautenbande"*; most pianists will know that the song begins simply, with a single chord. It has always struck me as superfluous, since the preceding song is in the same tonality of B-flat major. But Bezuidenhout takes the chord as a cue for an extended arpeggiation that adds a couple of notes not in Schubert's original: the sound of the miller's lute as the wind rustles through it. In *"Das Wandern"*, the artists markedly slow the tempo of the fourth strophe, effectively complementing the weight of the stones mentioned at that point.

The above examples, I hope, give some indication of the expressive immediacy of this amazing performance. Schubert's song cycle comes to life as the intricate, psychologically complex drama that it is. I have seldom experienced so fully the poignancy of the miller's unrequited love for the young girl (in *"Morgengrüss"*), his premature hope that she finally returns his love (in *"Mein!"*), the depth of his despair (in *"Der Müller und der Bach"*). Occasionally a few slight adjustments to the tempo might have conveyed the affect of certain songs better: in *"Der Neugierige"*, the central section of the song –where the protagonist addresses the mute brook directly– could be a little slower and more mystifying; after all, it is one of the first intimations in the cycle that all will not turn out well. Similarly, *"Die liebe Farbe"* could express the sense of hopelessness more powerfully at a very slow tempo. These criticisms, however, are really cavils; not much is seriously lost with the moderate tempos, which were in any case

closer to what we believe prevailed in the early nineteenth century.

Jan Kobow is a distinguished lyric tenor with an impressive list of credentials. His diction is particularly clear, and the timbre of his voice well-matched to Schubert's music. I could have used a little more heft in such songs as *"Eifersucht und Stolz"*; this is one moment that I prefer the earlier tenor and fortepiano recording of Christoph Prègardien and Andreas Staier on Deutsche Harmonia Mundi. But my highest praise goes to Kristian Bezuidenhout, who –perhaps more than any other fortepianist I know – demonstrates the range of tonal beauty and nuance of which the instrument is capable. He is aided in no small measure, I'm sure, by the fine instrument by Paul McNulty after Conrad Graf, ca. 1819 (no information on the tuning). To this incredible technique, Bezuidenhout also brings a surprising and extraordinarily persuasive musicianship which makes me feel as if I'm hearing *Die schöne Müllerin* for the first time. In short, fortepianists will find this recording absolutely indispensable.

Schubert. Poets of Sensibility, Volume 4.
Birgid Steinberger, Soprano, Wolfgang Holzmair, Baritone,
Ulrich Eisenlohr, Fortepiano.
Naxos 8.557569
Reviewed by James McCarty

Contents: *Zufriedenheit; Das Lied vom Reifen; An die Natur;*
Morgenlied; Blumenlied; Pflicht und Liebe; Erntelied; Zufriedenheit; Mailied; Die Mainacht; Am ersten Maimorgen; An die Nachtigall; Daphne am Bach; Frühlingslied; Phidile; Die Knabenzeit; An den Mond; An die Nachtigall; Klage um Ali Bey; Abendlied; Winterlied; Am Grabe Anselmos; Die Laube; Wiegenlied

Ulrich Eisenlohr, artistic advisor for Naxos's Deutsche Schubert Lied Edition, chose a fortepiano to accompany this volume of lieder comprising settings of 18th-century texts by Claudius, Hölty, zu Stolberg, and Gotter. These poets utilized the rhetorical *Affekt* of *Empfindsamkeit* (sensibility or sensitivity), characterized by intimacy, intense personal feeling, and sentimentality.

Whilst Eisenlohr performed the great majority of the songs in Naxos's series of over 700 *Lieder* with a modern piano, he elected to use a fortepiano for recording the songs after these "Poets of Sensibility." As he puts it, "the expression of 18th-century poetry, Schubert's music, and the possibilities of the fortepiano as a 'sensitive' instrument seemed to join perfectly.

The instrument is by Neupert after the 1815 Louis Dulcken (Munich). His six octave fortepiano is quite appropriate chronologically for Schubert. Although its range and tonal palette exceed those of the earlier five octave Viennese pianos, it retains the transparency and delicacy characteristic of those instruments. The instrument is tuned to equal temperament A440.

Eisenlohr, who has extensive experience performing and teaching lieder, tells me that he has no formal fortepiano training, having come "from the Steinway. Unlike some modern pianists who try their hand at earlier keyboards, however, he has succeeded in adapting his technique to the lighter action. Throughout the performance, one senses that touch, articulation, and dynamics are rightly judged.

The vocal contributions of Birgid Steinberger and Wolfgang Holzmair are quite up to the standard set by the accompanist. Both take advantage of the balance provided by the fortepiano, producing a seemingly effortless singing tone by not having to compete with the modern instrument. The elegant expression of the emotions in the texts, along with the dynamic contrasts made possible by the fortepiano, serve as most convincing arguments for the use of the earlier keyboard in this music.

It is always tempting to compare new recordings to old favourites, and in this case there is a venerable one, the 1965 Deutsche Harmonia Mundi LP featuring Elly Ameling, accompanied by Jörg Demus. In this performance, recorded in the famed Cedernsaal of the Schloss Kirchheim, Demus plays an 1835 fortepiano of 6 octaves by Franz Rausch, an apprentice of Conrad Graf. The Rausch is a somewhat darker instrument than the Neupert Dulcken, but Demus shows it to be a perfect foil for the brilliant and moving singing of Ameling.

The present recording just misses the vocal standards set by the over 40-year-old classic, but there is no duplication of songs between them, so even if one is fortunate enough to own the Ameling, there should be no hesitation in enjoying the delights of the new performance. Although the sentiments expressed in these songs are naïve by current standards, they are a most refreshing escape from the crudeness that passes for much of modern culture. Relax and enjoy them

Dark Harpsichord Music
Colin Booth, Harpsichord
Soundboard SBCD 203

Henry Purcell: The English Orpheus
Colin Booth, Harpsichord & Spinet
Soundboard SBCD 205

Reviewed by Calimerio Soares

For more than 25 years Colin Booth has combined the careers of harpsichordist and harpsichord maker. The harpsichord and spinet used in the recordings are beautiful historic replicas of a high level of craftsmanship. On listening to the both CDs, one can appreciate the excellent sound quality of these instruments. Colin Booth is an outstanding musician, coping with the intellectuality of his musical conception together with a brilliant keyboard technique. In *Dark Harpsichord Music*, his playing is almost a challenging surprise. At first, I was astonished; why "dark" harpsichord music? But the answer came across quickly, as soon as I read the CD booklet: Booth intended to preserve the same atmosphere of a concert he presented in the medieval Great Hall at Dartington, England, late on a summer's evening in 1995. The programme is quite eclectic and proves the high technical quality of the harpsichordist's interpretations.

Birds sing at the very beginning of the CD's audition. This atmosphere takes the listener to an English summer evening! Works by Jean Henry D'Anglebert (1628-91): *Prelude in G minor*; Armand-Louis Couperin (1725-89): *Allemande in G major*; Johann Mattheson (1681-1764): *Air in G minor*; Louis Couperin (c1626-1661): *Prelude in F major*; Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714-88): *Andante* (from *Sonata in F major*); D'Anglebert: *Prelude in D minor*, are followed by the brave arrangement (by the performer) of J. S. Bach's (1685-1750) *Chaconne in A minor* (from *Violin Partita in D minor*). The programme continues with FranÁois Couperin's (1668-1733): *Prelude in A major* (from *l'Art de Toucher le Clavecin*), Louis Andriessen's interesting *Overture to Orpheus*, a contemporary harpsichord piece of music which I heard sometime ago, in a (also) very beautiful interpretation by the harpsichordist Elaine Funaro (Centaur CRC 2517), and to conclude, Louis Couperin's lovely *Passacaille in G minor*.

In Henry Purcell: *The English Orpheus*, Colin Booth finds himself at home.

The opening and closing work on the recording is Purcell's famous *Round 0*. Magically orchestrated once by Benjamin Britten (1913-76) in "The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra" (1946), here it is brilliantly treated on the spinet by Booth.

The programme follows with *Suite in D minor* (Z.668), *Air* (Z.T676), *Ground* (Z.D222), *Suite in D major* (Z.667), *Suite in G major* (Z.662), *A New Scotch Tune* (Z.655), *Suite in G major* (Z.660), *A New Irish Tune* (Z.646), *Ground* (Z.645), *Suite in C major* (Z.666), *Rigadoon* (Z.653), *Song Tune* (Z.T694), *Trumpet Tune* (Cibell) Z.T678), *Suite in G minor* (Z.661), *Air* (Z.T693/2), *Suite in A minor* (Z.663), *Minuetts I and II* (Z.649 and 650), *Suite in F major* (Z.669), and *Air* (Z.630/1).

On a recording whose works are devoted to a sole composer, Colin Booth alternates the harpsichord and the spinet accordingly to the tonal concept and atmosphere of each piece. One can feel a particular English musical flavour whilst listening to this beautiful and elegant music! As Booth's excellent disc demonstrates, this alternate instrumental combination provides a interesting way to listen to this music.

***Bizarre or Barock*:**
anthology of encore pieces
Elizabeth Anderson, harpsichord
Move MD 3179
[Available from Move Records, 1 Linton Street, Ivanhoe, Victoria, Australia 3079]
n.d., n.p., 1997. Available outside AU online only at www.move.com.au
Reviewed by Penelope Cave

Rifling through a stand of CDs, the serious harpsichord aficionado might pass this by, as no harpsichord is depicted and or even mentioned on the spine or front cover. Perhaps there is a deliberate avoidance of categorisation intended; that will unfold. What confronts us is the Australian musician, Elizabeth Anderson, posed in the gothic style of "The Addams Family" and menacingly decapitating a red rose with a pair of secateurs on the back. On opening the jewel case, however, the booklet offers a serious definition of *barock* and *bizarre* including Burney's 1733 "coarse and uncouth," reminding us that "gothic" was used in a similar way in the eighteenth century. Inside is also a very different and rather endearing photograph of this multi-faceted artist looking here like the inspiration for Tenniel's *Alice in Wonderland*. In fact, the booklet is a good indication of the eclectic and imaginative programme that is to follow.

I was so surprised by the mixed bag of contents, that, like a child with her mother's button box, I have sorted the pieces into groups in order to understand just what is on offer here and to give the reader some idea of what it is that I am reviewing. There are 20 items: music in a popular idiom, seldom heard in "yer standard harpsichord recital", includes Willard Palmer's *Ragtime* and *Blues for Harpsichord*, Donald Angle's irresistible *Chocolate Bunnies* (that immediately motivated this reviewer to bop around the room!) and his arrangements of *Scarborough Fair*, *Eleanor Rigby,* and Gershwin's *I got Rhythm*.

Leyenda, the late 19th-century piece from the *Suite Espagnol* by Albeniz works excellently on the harpsichord in Anderson's own arrangement and 20th-century music includes somewhat relentless performances of Ligeti's *Hungarian Rock* (1978) and William Albright's *Danca Ostinata (1979)*. A fresh contemporary style is illustrated by Mary Mageau's entrancing piece, *Winter's Shadow* (for harpsichord and wind chimes), Lawrence Whiffin's *Cycles I*. In Earle Brown's *Nine Rarebits* (for two harpsichords), the performer uses multi-track to duet with herself. It is a *tour de force* and, in this case, it proves to be an act almost impossible to follow, where even Scarlatti seems a little washed out in such close proximity.

The mainstream repertoire is an excellent and often a humorous foil for the other pieces. Purcell's *New Ground* lacks a sense of forward movement, with a rather questionable final bar, but it acts as a cooler after the rather emphatic Ligeti. The other pieces are Scarlatti sonatas K517 and K175, Handel's *Harmonious Blacksmith,* (refreshingly followed by a heavy-beat version of *Eleanor Rigby*), Dandrieu's *Lyre of Orpheus* and Daquin's ubiquitous *The Cuckoo* (the English titles further emphasise that this is music without elitist pretensions). Diego Conceição's cheerful 1695 battle piece is one I had not come across before. All are played well with robust rhythm, but you will not be buying this CD for them, I suspect.

The diverse programme is actually surprisingly effective in the way one idiom follows another and the juxtapositions are full of humour and wit. It is easy to be snobby about popular music and it can be difficult to perform hackneyed pieces and make them fresh, but this programme contains many unusual and interesting works and arrangements that are, indeed, excellent as encores and some that are well worth including in the main body of a programme. Here is an open-minded musician who is encouraging the composition of new music and sweetening the pill by giving audiences some easy listening that is a foot-tapping triumph, ably assisted on a few of the tracks by Kylie Davis on double bass and Danny Fischer on drums. No one will disagree that she's "got rhythm". Returning to the presentation of this CD; it is designed to give as a gift to anyone, whatever their taste in music, and there will be something for each to enjoy. I am sure her audiences leave the concert hall with a smile on their faces and for this, too, you may well be happy to have this CD in your collection of music-to-cheer-you-up!

BOOKS

Mimi S. Waitzman, *Early Keyboard Instruments. Benton Fletcher Collection at Fenton House.*
(England: The National Trust, 2003)
With CD recordings by Terence R. Charlston
Reviewed by Charlene Brendler

A visual and aural delight greets the reader of the recent book on the Benton Fletcher Keyboard Collection at Fenton House, Hampstead Heath, London. Written by the Fletcher Collection's curator, expatriate American Mimi Waitzman, the volume engagingly presents the collection's origin, history, and benefactors. A compact disc sampler is included, with early keyboard specialist Terence Charlston performing on the instruments that are in playing condition. The intended audience —musically interested visitors to Fenton House and non-specialist readers— will find that, overall, the progressive layout of the book presents the material in an easily understandable manner. The instrumental entries are informative and have a considerable amount of data that will also engage readers of the builder/technician persuasion. Both the organisation and presentation of this book and the accompanying CD are excellent and praiseworthy.

There are several distinct parts to the project. They include the extremely useful introduction, the beautifully photographed instruments and their descriptions, and the well recorded compact disc presenting musical examples on the appropriate instruments.

The lengthy but exemplary introduction involves nearly a third of the entire volume. It

assumes little knowledge on the reader's part, thereby broadening the scope of the book and making it useful to the non-musician as well as the more well-informed. The thorough coverage of essential material for basic musical knowledge and harpsichord nomenclature undoubtedly will fill some gaps in a reader's knowledge. Those interested in the mechanical workings of early keyboards will benefit from the clear, beautifully drawn diagrams, as well as the description and identification of the action parts.

It is important to acknowledge the enormous amount of effort and work involved in this presentation when assessing its strengths and weaknesses. "Taking the tour," meaning to listen to the CD sampler and simultaneously gaze at the photograph of the instrument being played, doubles the impact and pleasure of the book. One is more motivated to read about the instrument upon hearing it played. Interesting information is sometimes offered in the text about composers and musical forms relating to a particular instrument, as in the discussion of the Broadwood square piano and the anonymous Italian harpsichord, c. 1590. These valuable remarks, however, could be augmented in the CD booklet. In other words, some additional commentary about the connection of the instrument, the music, the composers' lives, and musical events relating to the era of a chosen musical excerpt would deepen and tie together the intended historical context.

A brief discussion of musical style characteristics in the CD booklet would nicely mirror the instructive introduction in the hardbound book. Waitzman mentions the "complex artistic needs of the period of musical transition from the harpsichord to the piano" but *what are* those needs, and *what are the style characteristics* of transitional music from harpsichord to piano? Here is an unfulfilled opportunity to make this book and CD an even more valuable educational tool to the casual player or listener. The book mentions instruments serving a particular style, but it might useful to have more on the character of the style mentioned. Highlighting stylistic observations would guide the listener's ear. Comments on how a particular instrument admirably serves counterpoint or how homophonic style evolves during the popular use of the Shudi and Broadwood harpsichord, or an explanation of what "transitional" means, say, from the Baroque to Rococo era, would help the listener hear the music and the instrument with a heightened sensibility.

Mr. Charlston effectively performs a generous variety of music on the collection's instruments, using thirty tracks for the CD Sampler. For the most part, these examples are chosen to complement the particular instrument. Two surveys result: 1) the instruments in the Fenton House Collection, and 2) an auditory representation of keyboard repertoire that spans the mid-sixteenth century to the early nineteenth century. The listener is treated to the sounds of three different virginals, five British harpsichords, a spinet, two clavichords, (one fretted and one unfretted) an Italian harpsichord, and a fortepiano. What fun to compare the sounds of three different virginals by simply pushing a button on the CD player! It is a rich opportunity to compare and contrast both sonority and musical style. The majority of instruments in this collection are of British origin but the musical selections are wonderfully diverse, presenting some interesting choices for demonstration purposes.

Sometimes the musical choices on the CD seem curious. For instance, the Arne on the spinet is appealing, but why not Tompkins on the virginals? Instead of two Beethoven examples on the Broadwood, why not a Clementi selection for variety? How about Froberger *and* Handel on the Queen's Ruckers? These queries in no way diminish the final results. Hearing the rich resonance of the 1540 Virginals, the unusual K.F. Abel Ouverture, or the Gavotta on the Spinet are all luxuries afforded the listener. The saga of each instrument's restoration often leaves varying results as to how authentic the current sound really is, but to be afforded the insight to be gained from sitting and playing an instrument that is several hundred years old was Major Fletcher's wish in the early twentieth century. Major Fletcher's wish to restore and keep the instruments in playing order has given us delight, but perhaps as with the Ruckers, not always authenticity.

The author suggests one use this beautiful book while visiting the collection. This could be a bit cumbersome. Reading it leisurely as a reference resource before or after a visit might be more comfortable and better serve to inform or reinforce the experience of the visit itself. Besides the above mentioned merits, there are three appendices, a glossary, and an extensive bibliography for the interested reader. On the whole, this volume is enthusiastically recommended as a fine addition to the library of any keyboard lover, listener, student, or teacher.

Thomas Donahue, *A Guide to Musical Temperament.*
(The Scarecrow Press, Inc: Lanham, MA, Toronto, Oxford, 2005).
Reviewed by Micaela Schmitz

I'll be honest - I had to review this myself because several people I approached were unwilling to review a book on tuning. Based on the annoyance often generated on the well-known HPSCH-L listserv, I knew it might be difficult so I reluctantly took on the task myself. Once I started I quickly saw its usefulness, and was glad it was my task to read this useful volume.

The truth is that understanding tuning takes a bit of work, but as many instrument makers will say; tuning is part of the art of performance. There are many opinions ranging from tuning being the trademark of a performer to a necessary evil (chore). Some celebrity performers claim to use their own special temperament and either teach it to their students or keep it a trade secret. The fact is that anyone who plays ought to understand tuning and needs work with it. Secondly, it is no more mysterious than learning to read music, and with all the historical information available, there is not necessarily a need for a new proprietary, one-size-fits-all "tuning recipe." What is needed is understanding so that we can all make tuning systems our own, adapting them to keys and musical situations.

While no book can promise to do tuning for you, Donahue's book spells out some complex tuning problems and their solutions. The book contains a great deal of reference material alongside practical instruction for adapting it to different situations.

The book is set out in two parts, with Part 2 titled "Supplementary Material". While Donahue has cleverly reserved some of the more technical items for the supplement, the casual reader will find plenty of equations and table in Part 1, an inevitable result of the subject matter. They are worth the reader's effort.

Part 1 gives the reasoning for the rise of various temperaments, explaining commas and systems in general. It then gives an overview and comparison of selected temperaments, with data showing the amount of tempering between intervals in units such as the fraction of the Pythagorean comma (e.g. –1/4 P.C), cents (e.g. 696 Hz) and comma values (-6). It also explains and uses "comma based notation" such as Valotti 4 4 4 4 4 0 0 0 0 0 0 4. The one notation style not used is the circle, which I would think might be useful for any of the learning styles not covered by the other three or four methods. (The only other odd feature is that everything is based on A440, but I guess you have to choose a base line, and in any case Donahue explains how to convert these to other pitch levels.)

An entire chapter is devoted to discussing the practical uses and limits of a range of temperaments (Curiously, instead of immediately following this one, the chapter on "Historical Uses" is placed at the very end of Part 1.)

Next we have calculations. Some are more involved, using logs to calculate frequencies and beat rates. Donhaue helpfully places the more technical log equations in a separate supplemental chapter so the reader will not be bogged down, yet those who comfortable can be assured as to the derivation of equations. This section also explains the difference between the "equal beating method" and theoretical methods —extremely important-_ and guides readers to creating their own tuning instructions (recipes) based on known theoretical parameters for temperaments.

A chapter on the tuning process explains mechanics and practicalities, such as how to listen for beats, before turning to prose instructions for setting specific temperaments. These use letter names and the note to be tuned is in bold text [e.g. **f**-a pure]. A supplemental chapter gives instructions using Jorgenson's staff notation where the note to be tuned is filled in and the reference note is not filled in. Both give instructions starting from either A or C tuning forks.

The supplement is a reference that allows for conversion to different pitches, different key centres, etc., actual data of frequencies, and an explanation of how to use and generate computer spreadsheets, plus the derivation of the "cent equation". I now live in hope that I shall find the HPSCH-L tuning discussions easier to follow!

This book could be used by someone looking for a "quick and dirty" tuning recipe. However, experience is vital here, and the practical tuner is advised to read the other information on how the tuning recipes came about and to compare the two methods of displaying instructions. Simply turning to the recipe for *temperament ordinaire* and trying it may not yield perfect results without the background knowledge in the rest of the book. Indeed, Donahue himself gives the disclaimer that one should have a grounding in the theory before approaching this book. I contend that

those who need help ought to be working with a good teacher anyway, who really should help in guiding the novice tuner.

Some may quibble that there are no original translations. For those who want to follow up the historical sources, there are plenty of citations in the endnotes; if there were original translations the book might be too thick.

For those who have not tuned before, this would be a tough read without a little help; and these readers should stick to the more practical chapters, choosing one or two temperaments as a starting point. Those with more tuning experience will appreciate lucid explanations of the theory, and for those willing to do a bit of mental work, it allows the reader to understand how we get from theory to practice, quite literally.

I heartily recommend this book to anyone who is willing to put in the time; after all a book that is truly going to help us to tune cannot by nature be "bedside reading".

James R. Gaines, *Evening in the Palace of Reason.* (London: Fourth Estate, 2005). *reviewed by Madeline Goold*

James Gaines' *Evening in the Palace of Reason* is an informative and fascinating read. He takes one evening, May 7th 1747, as a pivotal moment in the history of Western music and makes it the focus of his book. J.S Bach was 62 when he attended a summons to the palace of Frederick the Great of Prussia at Potsdam. Voltaire's 28 year old "Philosopher King" presented "Old Bach" with a sequence of 21 notes (possibly provided by Bach's second son Carl Philipp Emanuel, harpsichordist to Frederick's Court) and invited him to improvise a three-part fugue. Bach more than met the challenge, whereupon Frederick pressed him to do the same again for six voices. Not surprisingly, Bach demurred and, nettled by his discomfiture, he spent the next three weeks composing sixteen variations on the king's theme. There is no record of Frederick's reaction to *The Musical Offering* nor any evidence that he ever played it.

Gaines sees the incident as a musical expression of the confrontation between the old belief in Divine Order and a new rationality that was at the heart of the 19th-century Enlightenment; and sets it against the broader historic background. As a young man Frederick was beaten, abused and finally broken by a cruel father. Music was his only consolation, and Gaines gives us a vivid portrait of a red-robed Frederick, playing his flute and powdering his hair, who learned to hide his sensitive side, eventually becoming as hardened as his father —an old warrior king whose belief in the supremacy of man's reason left him cynical, empty and alone. He also shows us the harsh school that formed Bach: passed over for inferiors by unresponsive civic and ecclesiastic employers and treated as a lackey by petty princes. It is a picture of an angry, frustrated man underlining revealing passages in his Bible commentary.

Gaines sees the evening at Potsdam as a crossroads in Western music. On one side was a centuries old tradition –the system of learned counterpoint of which Bach was the greatest exponent. We are given examples and explanations of the structure of canon, fugue and counterpoint, written in plain language that the non-musician can understand. On the other side, the new rationalists wanted charming, melodious, and above all, entertaining music: Some examples and similar explanations here would have been helpful.

The conflict between the music of belief and the music of reason, *sensus* versus *ratio,* was not clear cut. I had trouble reconciling Gaines' reference to "the cold logic of counterpoint," with his assertion that its practitioners saw themselves as guardians of a quasi-divine tradition; and why was the *galant* and *Empfindsamer Stil* the music of rationality? The feeling I got from the book was that Bach's system was the more rational!

Whatever the underlying philosophical conflict, the instrument on which Bach was invited to improvise, a Silbermann fortepiano from the king's collection, had rather more effect on changing styles of music in the second half of the eighteenth century than the half page mention in this book might suggest. Nonetheless, Gaines builds his ingenious idea to the marvellous conclusion of the book's last half sentence: "...Bach's music makes no argument that the world is more than a ticking clock, yet somehow manages to leave no doubt of it."