

Harpsichord & fortepiano

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BOOK REVIEWS

Giulia Nuti. *The Performance of Italian Basso Continuo: Style in Keyboard Accompaniment in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. (Ashgate, 2007) ISBN 978-0-7546-0567-6
Reviewed by Douglas Hollick

This book, by an experienced practitioner of the art of continuo, sets out to clarify styles of specifically Italian accompaniment during the Baroque. There is an Introduction and five chapters - Forms of Accompaniment in the Sixteenth Century (13 pages), The Early Seventeenth Century (42 pages), The Eighteenth Century (66 pages), and The End of Basso Continuo Creativity (5 pages). Nuti uses mostly her own translations of the Italian sources, giving both the original and the English.

In many ways this is a fascinating and useful book, and the chapter on the seventeenth century is particularly good, explaining the roots of continuo and figured bass in early opera, and the desire for much more freedom of expression according to the words which this demanded. In the chapter on the eighteenth century a number of practices, not always incorporated in the performance of continuo today, are described, particularly the use of trills, and acciaccature or dissonant notes in chords. Some of the suggested trill patterns quoted from Lorenzo Penna of 1684 are certainly strange to modern ears, and sometimes technically more challenging than Nuti acknowledges. It is clear from the material she quotes that the use of dissonant notes in arpeggiated chords 'sometimes held, sometimes released' was greater than often heard today.

Gasparini's famous treatise of 1708 is quoted from extensively, so it is strange that she makes no mention of Frank Stillings' English translation edited by David Burrows, published in 1963 by Yale School of Music and reissued by Yale University Press in 1968. There is also no mention in the bibliography of Lars Ulrik Mortensen's extremely useful article on Corelli in Early Music 24 (1996). Because she is restricting herself to only Italian sources and Italian styles in continuo, there is no mention of Johann David Heinichen, who spent several years in Italy. His *General-Bass in der Composition* of 1728 and George Bülow's invaluable book about Heinichen and thorough-bass accompaniment are not drawn to the reader's attention, despite being very relevant.

The differences of approach between playing organ or harpsichord and questions of instrumentation are addressed. Tuning and temperament are touched upon briefly,

mainly in terms of the problems associated with different continuo instruments playing together. There are copious musical examples, but Nuti refrains from giving any realisations; some historical examples of realisation are quoted, but most are left for the reader to work out. This leaves me wondering what readership she is targeting? The professional player will find much of interest here, but perhaps not enough to justify buying the book, whilst the less capable amateur would find examples of realisation interesting and useful, and without them may find the book less accessible. The lack of reference to English translations of books such as the Gasparini is also curiously unhelpful, and I wonder if the self-imposed parameters of the book are too strictly adhered to?

Despite these misgivings, this is a book which should undoubtedly find its place on the shopping list of most continuo players, hopefully to be used in conjunction with a broader frame of reference on this subject.

SCORES

J.S. Bach. *Das Wohltempierte Clavier: Teil I and II.* (Munich, G. Henle Verlag). Pl. 14, and 16. Ed. Ernst-Günter Heinemann, with fingering and commentary by András Schiff.
Reviewed by Micaela Schmitz

This collection stems from the original autographs, and the many variants which students copied (Walther, Altnickol, Anna Magdalena, anon. 5 and so on) are employed where needed.

The edition does a good job of laying out the music and making clear what was original to the autograph. For example, works where students' ornaments were written that are not found in the original are given in smaller type. The layout can't solve every page turn problem, but it's fairly well thought-out.

I always hesitate to comment when it comes to fingering, but I must give Schiff credit for dealing with this. In his commentary he writes that he accepted the commission with reluctance and found "the sheer impossibility of my task" to be daunting a respectful attitude, indeed! The fingerings are fairly discreet and I am pleased that Heinemann has left the original pretty much alone.

There are brackets indicating where a new voice has entered and the placement of lines in the top or bottom stave will influence the

player. I trust these are done with the original's placement and therefore we have nothing to complain about either as scholars or as players.

There are some dynamic markings (stemming from the original) which Schiff suggests are manual changes, and I can't disagree with this. He gives the sense of awareness that Bach's contemporaries knew what to do – when it comes to re-striking a note which has decayed or arpeggiating a chord. He writes that it is possible on modern pianos but not exclusively.

Despite my early keyboard leanings, I do understand why Henle will persist in saying these are "piano pieces", market forces being what they are. The market for piano music is much larger than that for harpsichord, clavichord or fortepiano, and the next Schiff or Hewitt will need a score.

Johann Sebastian Bach. *Sechs Partiten* (BWV 825–830). Ed. Rudolf Steglich (1970), with additions (1979). (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2008).
Reviewed by **Gregory Crowell**

One might expect a collection published during the composer's lifetime and under the composer's supervision to be relatively free of complications for the modern editor. Nevertheless, J.S. Bach's *Clavier-Übung I*, which was published as individual partitas from 1726 to 1730, and finally as a set (Opus 1) in 1731, presents a number of problems. First, there is the existence of variant readings of the Partitas, including the early versions of Partitas 3 and 6 in the *Anna Magdalena Notenbuch*. Secondly, there are a number of versions postdating the 1731 edition that may well impart corrections originating from the composer. The latter include a c.1760 copy of four of the Partitas by C.F. Penzel, and as many as five copies of the second (undated) printing of the Partitas, each with handwritten annotations. Lastly, the publications prepared under Bach's direction seem not to have been carried out with particular care; while great effort was made to avoid awkward page turns (sometimes by means of even more awkward layouts, such as the squeezed-in conclusion to the D Major Minuet), there are missing accidentals and ambiguously placed ornaments throughout the collection. Many of these problems are evident in the publication under consideration here, which is a reissue of the edition prepared by Rudolf Steglich in 1970 that includes information available from some sources discovered after his 1976 death.

A look at Partita 4 in D Major will suffice to illustrate some of the matters confronting a

modern editor of these works, as well as some of the merits and faults of this edition. Steglich apparently appreciated many of the subtleties of the original print. For example, this edition, like the original edition, aligns some notes in such a way as to imply double dotting in the opening Ouverture (b. 6, soprano). Steglich also reproduced the imprecise placement of some of the ornaments, such as in the Ouverture, (b. 7, 8, soprano), where the original print allowed trills to hover ambiguously over the dotted quaver-semitrill figure. (The Bach Gesellschaft edition, as well as generations of players, have inexplicably favoured placing the ornaments on the semiquavers.) Yet a trill placed without comment over a hemi-semitrill in the soprano of b.10 of the Henle edition does not appear at all in the original print, and is surely unrealistic and unjustified.

The D Major Sarabande offers an example of a common problem relating to the original print, which did not assume that accidentals remained in effect for the duration of a bar. In bar 17, the original print adds a sharp before the fifth, ninth, and thirteenth notes in the bar (D sharp), but not the first and seventh notes (D natural). The Henle edition omits the sharp in front of the thirteenth note. That all of the Ds in the bar should be D sharps save the very first note in the bar is clear from the harmonic context; the original edition simply left one of the sharps out. In this case, Steglich has compounded rather than corrected an oversight! (A similarly egregious missing accidental can be found in Partita 2, Capriccio (b. 18), where the original print omits a natural sign before the last note in the alto, an omission repeated in the Bach Gesellschaft edition, but corrected in this edition.)

Although this edition includes some variant readings from surviving prints with handwritten corrections, one of the most important of such prints was not consulted. The copy now in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna may well be Bach's own Handexamplar, and contains a number of very interesting alterations, including the addition of mordents to the first crotchet in the main theme of the Capriccio of Partita 2, as well as a number of turns in the Allemande of the same Partita. The absence of these minor but rather elegant refinements originating (arguably) from the composer himself is regrettable.

It is especially unfortunate that Steglich's original preface continues to be included in this new printing. Already somewhat outdated in 1970, Steglich's comments are made all the more useless to English speakers by a simply dreadful English translation in which, among other mystifying transgressions, *Clavier-Übung* is

consistently translated as 'Clavichord Practice'. Furthermore, the English rendition of Steglich's already obtuse characterization of Bach's ornamentation ('lebendiger Ausdruck der inneren Feinbewegtheit der Melodie') comes perilously close to gibberish ('the living expression of the delicate inner emotional agitation of the melody'). One is strongly advised to simply skip the preface altogether, and forbid its being read by impressionable students! Indeed, anyone with the technical and musical prowess needed to pull these pieces off will probably know already that such personal observations are superfluous in a purportedly Urtext edition, and that few editions of Bach's works can be trusted exclusively. Used in conjunction with the facsimile of the 1731 edition published by Performers' Editions (New York, Performers' Editions 83996), the player will find in this Henle edition a clearly printed and readable text that gives a good, if not infallible picture of the deceptively complicated history of *Clavier-Übung I*.

Johann Sebastian Bach. Kleine Präludien und Fughetten. Ed. Rudolf Steglich (1975). (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2008). Pl. No. 1106. Reviewed by Gregory Crowell

This fifty-four page volume contains the Six Little Preludes from the *Clavier-Büchlein für Wilhelm Friedemann Bach* (BWV 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 930), the Six Little Preludes (BWV 933 8), a number of miscellaneous pieces (Preludes BWV 931, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 999, the Fughettas 961, 952, 953), and the Preludes and Fughettas BWV 899, 895, 900, 902, 902a]. While not all of these pieces can with confidence be ascribed to Bach (BWV 925, 927, 931 could well be by Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, and Bach's authorship of BWV 899 is highly doubtful), they nevertheless constitute a useful collection for any budding keyboardist.

The present issue is a reprint of the 1975 edition, and presents a cleanly printed and quite accurate text of these pieces. Autograph manuscripts were consulted when possible, and a number of manuscripts by Bach's students, including Johann Christian Kittel and Johann Peter Kellner, were consulted as well. Indeed, a comparison of the C Major Prelude (BWV 924) with the autograph score from 1720 shows that the piece is accurately reproduced in this edition. Especially helpful is the inclusion of Bach's own ornament table from the *Clavier-Büchlein*. The very French ornamentation of BWV 931 includes a number of symbols not shown in Bach's ornament table, including pincé, arpegé, port de voix en montant, and coulé. The rhythmic realization of the first three bars provided in the commentary at the end of the

volume might get a student started on how to play this heavily ornamented piece, although the inclusion of, say, D'Anglebert's ornament table would have been much more useful.

Occasional infelicities in the page layout might well cause some confusion for beginners. These include a wayward, superfluous forte indication in b.2 of BWV 933, and an accidental coupled with a mordant that could well be read as belonging to the note below the ornamented note (b. 9 of BWV 933). J.S. Bach's original fingerings are included for BWV 930.

Haydn. Klavierstücke, Klaviervariationen. Ed. Sonja Gerlach. With fingering by Christine Schornsheim. (Munich: Henle Verlag, 2007). Pl. 224. Reviewed by Micaela Schmitz

This 2007 issue replaces the old Pl. 224 from 1981, also edited by Sonja Gerlach. The main difference is that it includes more pieces. The original had six pieces (Capriccio in G, Fantasia/Capriccio in C, and Variations in A, Eb, C and F Minor. Also, an appendix included the Adagio in D (doubtful) and what was then a newly discovered Adagio in F, Hob XVII: 9.

The new edition has all these but in a slightly different order. It includes the Capriccio in C, and Variations in A and Eb, and then lists *Differentes petites pieces faciles et agréables*, published by Artaria as op. 46. This has ten items which are all adaptations of other works; the sole original work in this set is the Adagio in F just mentioned.

After these, the volume includes the Fantasia/Capriccio in C, Variations in C and Variations in F Minor. These are followed by five *Verschiedene Klavier Bearbeitungen*, adapted from quartets, symphonies, chorales, and the like. Finally, the editor has reconstructed the Largo assai in E Minor from fragments and a contemporary arrangement; it's a lovely piece which appears in the 2006 edition of the complete works.

In her preface, Gerlach states that (p. vii) the earlier pieces (the Capriccio in G and Variations in A) must be for harpsichord because of their use of the Vienner Bassoktave (which leaves CDEFG without accidentals, to allow a special short octave arrangement). However, as the "Acht Sauchsneider" set works so brilliantly on clavichord, I think it a great oversight of the editor that she fails to mention this instrument. This volume is considerably thicker than the one I had from 1981, and might be too heavy for a clavichord, but is well presented otherwise.

Grant Colburn. *Sets or Suits of Lessons for the Harpsicord or Spinnet Consisting of Great Variety of Movements.* (Green Bay, Wisconsin, USA: Printed and Published by the Author, 2008).

Reviewed by Gerald Gifford

In these works, according to the composer's own preface, Grant Colburn has deliberately set out to emulate a style of keyboard composition that "hearkens back to English composers probably somewhere around 1720 or slightly before, and is mainly inspired by the music of William Croft, Anthony Young and Thomas Roseingrave". Here, then, are essentially exercises in pastiche, and the temptation – given the clues to their stylistic origins indicated by the composer – would be to engage in a fairly valueless attempt to "spot the tune". Better, I think, to try and view the music on its own terms, and then to assess whether it, broadly speaking, fits the bill. In terms of technical difficulty, these pieces are mostly straightforward to play, many are sight-readable, and there are only a few moments that may potentially hold surprises for the unwary.

In general, Mr Colburn demonstrates a perceptive understanding of the important keyboard dance styles of the period and is quite capable of replicating such international stylistic mannerisms as they may engage. In terms of keyboard idiom, he also shows a good grasp of the "feel" of such music, and an understanding of early keyboard instrument sonority, though I do question his decision to jettison appropriate period ornamentation symbols in favour of modern signs, in order to appeal to the "average keyboard player" as he states. If one is thinking of these pieces as forming useful expansions or adjuncts to the available original repertoire for professional players as well, then the studied inclusion of such features as these remains desirable.

Having played through all of the pieces in the collection, I found Lesson VI in G Major overall the most rewarding. The vivacity of the Prelude, in both its rhythmical and registral procedures, inhabits the world of William Babell; the active textural interplay of the Allemande is certainly indicative of Roseingrave (though the latter composer pursues on the whole far less predictable voice-leading), whilst the employment of a subtle hemiola -like harmonic rhythm in the opening section of the Corant has parallels in Purcell and Locke. The Sarabande has strong Handelian overtones, as does a concluding March, though I personally feel that a Jigg would have provided a more satisfying ending for the Suite as a whole.

The collection reveals Mr Colburn's confident understanding of many of the guiding stylistic

principles involved in the original music, and as his scores are set out in easily accessible and neat modern music type, mastering them may also serve to encourage students to then search out and investigate further the original repertoire itself, and thus encounter its own sometimes idiosyncratic engraved texts. Certain hidden treasures may indeed be found.

Albertus Bryne. *Keyboard Music for Harpsichord and Organ.* Interactive Edition. Ed. Terence Charlston. CD-ROM by Heather Windram & Terence Charlston; "Hidden Treasures of Music", (Norsk Musikforlag A/S, 2007). N.M.O.12448A The audio Cd of the performance is also available on its own from CD sellers.

Reviewed by Grant Colburn

Known in his own day as "that famously velvet fingered Organist", Albertus Bryne comes primarily from that dark place in English history known as the Commonwealth. But with this new interactive publication of Bryne's complete keyboard works edited by Terence Charlston, we have before us a prototype for future publications to come.

Albertus Bryne was born around 1621 and died in 1668 in Westminster. He succeeded his teacher John Tomkins as organist of St. Paul's Cathedral in 1638 but was dismissed during the Commonwealth, during which he taught harpsichord. He returned to St. Paul's after the Restoration, and after the Great Fire of London took a post at Westminster Abbey, where he was succeeded by John Blow at his death. His suites for harpsichord are among the earliest English examples with four movements.

This first edition of his complete keyboard works includes not only the expected modern scores in book form (with over 25 pages of biography, notes, editorial and performance practice commentary, and a brief history of instruments available in Bryne's day), but also a high quality recording of the works performed by Charlston on harpsichord and organ. The real surprise however lies in the interactive CD-ROM assembled by Mr. Charlston and Heather Windram. It is this interactive disk which places this edition on the cutting edge of music publications.

What we get from the CD-ROM is an extremely detailed account of every step of discovery from the original manuscripts to the final book and recording, including images of all the existing scores, their modern notated equivalents, and even options which provide bar for bar comparison of the scores with the appropriate performance audio to go with it. Other features include further details mentioned in the book's preface which are elaborated

upon in the CD-ROM including transcripts of a petition made by Bryne to Charles II, and Bryne's last will and testament. This makes the CD-ROM function much like a bonus disk for a "special edition" DVD for a film. The final conclusion one draws from this publication with combined formats is breathtaking. It should be a guiding light to how other new music publications should be done, particularly for university libraries around the world.

That said though, it is somewhat ironic that this has been done for such an obscure composer who is represented by about 30 short pieces of keyboard music. Not that such work for an obscure composer shouldn't be done, but one gets the feeling from the CD-ROM, having the same 25 pages of information as the book, that there was far more room for information available than what actually existed for the composer. It also begs the question of whether Albertus Bryne is important enough for there to be a market for an edition which surely costs more than a single book would. It seems the CD recording of the works is available independently, but there is no way to own merely the book without the other disks. This would again parallel the concept of a "special edition" DVD, with perhaps a "non-specialist edition" of just the book.

In conclusion though, this publication is a stunning prototype for what will be, hopefully the musicological wave of the future. It shows a meticulous attention to detail and trail blazes an enlightened path forward into the 21st century for both early music publications and classical music in general.

RECORDINGS

**Mark Wingfield - electric guitar,
Jane Chapman - harpsichord,
Iain Ballamy - saxophone.**
"Three Windows." Dark Energy Music, 2008.
 CD available from AbstractLogix,
 JazzCDs and iTunes
 Reviewed by Pamela Nash

On the face of it, a jazz crossover album of electric guitar, harpsichord and saxophone may seem an unlikely mix; not an obvious choice for the easy-listening dinner-jazz crowd, nor, for that matter, the mainstream classical audience. But when you have three of the UK's most fearless and innovative players putting new spin on everything from 17th-century French preludes to minimalism, and from Hindustani airs to rock, all with the drive of "Nu Jazz" behind it, the potential following should be as diverse

and eclectic as the themes themselves. Even those listeners with fixed notions of the harpsichord as an icon of the Baroque should chance a listen to this album, as, apart from anything else, it supports a new notion that the harpsichord is continuing to evolve and make an impact on the direction of contemporary music. That the instrument can be as liberated and musically anarchic as both its partners may come as a surprise, but this recording forges new frontiers at every turn and will confound expectations for fans of all three instruments.

One of the cleverest and most satisfying aspects of this heady mix is that the instrumental characters are disparate, not so much blending as illuminating one another, and it is this very juxtaposition of the three sound worlds which gives the music its raw invigorating energy and verve. Yet the musicians also explore ways for their instruments to communicate and complement each other, with particular focus on the associations between the guitar and harpsichord —the vibrating strings, the attack, and the similarity of the harpsichord's bass strings to the sound of the electric guitar; it is these affinities which inspire many of the musical ideas.

The compositions are in the main by Mark Wingfield in collaboration with Jane Chapman, whose perspective as a harpsichordist is a pervasive influence throughout the 12 tracks. Indeed, harpsichord technique is central to the way the material is manipulated as well as being integral to Chapman's own improvisations. Even Baroque repertoire itself is reborn in the two d'Anglebert unmeasured Preludes, where the harpsichord provides a sonic and harmonic "environment" for the guitar; an ideal context for Wingfield's hauntingly seductive, sophisticated flights of imagination which are coloured with Indian and Middle-Eastern melodic strands and made exquisitely expressive by pitch-bending and string-sliding. Harpsichord connoisseurs needn't fear however; this is d'Anglebert dramatised and embellished, not compromised. They will discover an inspired meeting of two worlds in which intricately composed classical form and jazz improvisation merge into an organically integrated whole.

The saxophone with its softer colouring makes a perfect "counterpoint" to the more strident tones of the harpsichord and guitar, although its role is not always as integral to the musical structure. But whilst on some tracks it is employed more as a kind of patina, on others it adds a stronger dimension, such as in the sinuously-improvisatory "The Serpent" and in "Three Windows". Both are examples of how all three instrumental threads combine to make a musically-integrated weave, thereby

allowing the listener to become immersed in the tonal layering, intoxicating plateaux of sound and the gorgeously refined breathiness of Ballamy's playing. In both tracks, Wingfield's use of guitar electronics creates the sort of voicing and sustained note-layering which are not actually possible on the guitar alone; the resulting washes of sound form the backdrop to an almost cinematic atmosphere of panoramic space, punctuated by the harpsichord and saxophone rippling through the suspended textures. Elsewhere on the album, the same theatrical, almost filmic sense of place and time is subtly enhanced by sound effects woven in by producer Ashley Slater.

"African Sea", derived from traditional mbira (thumb-harp) music, is another showcase for the harpsichord and guitar, their motoric and buoyant rhythmic interplay - with more than a nod in the direction of Steve Reich - being one of the joys of this recording. A horn synth patch simulates a fourth voice, at times blasting out, fanfare-like, whilst in other places resonantly but subtly shadowing the saxophone.

The jaunty "Shufhah" is based around an 18th-century Hindustani air, re-cast here as a harpsichord solo but becoming transformed as it breaks into increasingly happy jazz moods with a dance drum-beat in its final phase. "Sun bird", based on a tribal song from Ethiopia, is perhaps the closest thing to light, boppy jazz on the album with its regular groove, whilst "Diablada" is a frenetic, virtuoso, rock-influenced romp for harpsichord and guitar, exploiting the growling punchiness of the harpsichord's bass notes. The dark and eerie world of "Amber", the least jazz-inflected of all the tracks, is really a foray into classical contemporary, or avant-garde jazz whose essentially atonal design is tempered by moments of tonality. It may not be the track one returns to the most but it is a brave departure from the rest of the programme.

Of all the things to say about this pioneering recording, one of the most important is that it is a testament to the spirit of artistic discovery. Its musical statements are utterly persuasive and wholly innovative, and whilst it might not capture everyone's imagination to the same extent, it can at the very least teach us things about the possibilities of these instruments that we didn't already know.

The only reservation concerns the order of the tracks: "African Sea" would perhaps have more impact as an opening track (instead of the introverted "Kites"), with "Prelude II" as the second track - if only for the curiosity of the harpsichordist! The harpsichord used on the recording is a Blanchet copy, 1984, by David Rubio.

Calvert Johnson - Organ, Harpsichord.
"Soliloquies: New Japanese and Chinese Music for Harpsichord and Organ." Albany Records, TROY 1049.
Reviewed by Pamela Nash

This enterprising disc by the American artist Calvert Johnson is a welcome addition to the growing crop of harpsichord and organ recordings featuring music of living composers. Most of the composers represented here have strong American affiliations, and all are thoroughly grounded in Western musical composition, but as you would expect from the title, the music also references their oriental roots and musical traditions. Far from attempting a deliberate East-meets-West fusion however, they have produced works of individuality where Asian elements are infused without dominating the essentially classical contemporary character of the music. The exception to this, of all the harpsichord music on this disc, is Isaac Nagao's atmospheric "Ancient Cities" which portrays the koto throughout and is based on the Kumoijoshi pentatonic scale which perfectly demonstrates the harpsichord's natural aptitude for expressing these stylistic elements. This instrument's particular affinity with the Japanese koto is remarkable and could have been explored further within those pieces which already point up the relationship, such as Makiko Asaoka's "Four Pieces for Harpsichord" which makes use of koto-style rolling chords and open fourths, but perhaps too sparingly, leaving the listener expecting more.

Toru Takemitsu's "Rain Dreaming" demands complex registration changes disproportionate to the simplicity of the music, but it works well for the instrument because of the cool, almost steely control of the thematic ideas which are bound up with the composer's sensitivity to harpsichord resonance and tonal delay. By contrast, in some of the other harpsichord works, there is a tendency to try to do too much with the instrument and to interrupt the flow of good writing with unaccountable shifts into territory which is distinctly inexpressive and un-idiomatic of the harpsichord. Particularly puzzling is the occasional insistence on fast repetitions of close-voiced chords too high up on the instrument. If you want to make the harpsichord sound gratingly unpleasant, this is how! Asako Hirabayashi's "Sonatina No.1", a case in point, is in fact a rather manic, disjunct work all round; a case of too many competing ideas trying to burst forth at once, which rather belies the fact that the composer is also a harpsichordist.

"Rio", the last of Makiko Asaoka's "Four Pieces for Harpsichord", also disappoints with unfulfilled promise; after establishing an

irresistible Latin rhythmic groove in the bass, it decamps into shrilly insistent chord passages which, whatever the musical intention, only succeed in disconnecting the listener abruptly from a world of sounds that work well on the instrument to those that simply don't.

This is not a concern in Karen Tanaka's "Jardin des Herbes" for Harpsichord, a suite of three pieces, each one consistent and focused in its treatment of harpsichord resonance and timbre. "Rosemary" and "Sweet Violet" are sensuous and spacious, the latter indeed invoking "early spring flowers with seductive scent", whilst "Lavender" is in fact in the mould of Ligeti's "Continuum", even down to Ligeti's stipulated duration -though there is nothing wrong with emulating an existing idea if it is done with as much panache as it is here.

The harpsichord and organ make unusual bedfellows when listened to in actual disc order. The harpsichord's tonal immediacy and attack -after the acoustic distance and sustain of the organ comes as somewhat of an aural assault, but it is an interesting effect for the ear to be thereby re-awakened and soothed by turns. Probably this is so because the harpsichord is one of the most problematic instruments to write for, it would seem easier to compose for the organ without compromising its character, and indeed there are only fleeting instances of what is arguably un-idiomatic organ writing. Two or three pieces remain particularly memorable, the most outstanding of which is Wang An-Ming's "Fantasy for Organ". Its atmosphere of oriental mysticism tinged with French Romantic organ writing is beautifully controlled around its central theme, and there is simple directness about it which is somehow liberating after the relative thematic complexity of many of the accompanying works on the disc.

Whilst not as diverting, "Myabi" Ballad for Organ by Reiko Arima demonstrates the composer's experience and confidence with the instrument. Inspired by Japanese forms and structures and by ancient Japanese court music, it is in fact the polytonality and command of the instrument that are the over-riding factors.

Of the two pieces for organ by Chan Ka Nin, "Promenade" inspires repeated listening for its portrayal of a child's wide-eyed curiosity, evoked by offsetting the complex rhythmic design and mixed metres with the use of only the white keys of the organ. Pei-lun Vicky Chang, the youngest composer on this recording (b.1966) and herself an organist, based "Cloudy Sky" and "Raining Night's Flower" on Taiwanese folk melodies in honour of her heritage and in order to introduce the organ to audiences in Taiwan where it is still a relatively new instrument, unlike in China and Japan. The second of these little jewels casts its melody in the form of a simple hymn in rondo:

one piece in this collection that I will want to return to many times for its endearing charm.

Throughout this recording, Calvert Johnson's enthusiasm for the music comes across unfailingly, and although at times he appears to be more at home on the organ than the harpsichord he nevertheless champions all the composers with aplomb, no doubt to their unanimous delight and gratitude. Despite some imperfect harpsichord tuning apparent in some high register passages, the recording is of excellent quality, and the instruments both sound ravishing. Anderson Dupree's French Double harpsichord has great tonal clarity which has been closely milked to give a strident quality which I liked and which suited all of the music here. The Manuel Rosales organ brings out all the best qualities in every piece, and is again well captured by Albany Recordings.

Colin Booth - harpsichord,

"Johann Mattheson, Harmony's Monument; Harmonisches Denckmahl: The Twelve Suites of 1714." Soundboard Records, SBCD 208. Reviewed by Gregory Crowell

Though mostly celebrated for his interesting (if meandering) writings about music, Johann Mattheson (1681-1764) was an extraordinarily accomplished performer. The suites recorded on this disc were published in London and Hamburg in 1714. Though Mattheson's reputation will perhaps always stand in the shadow of his more famous contemporaries, and most especially that of his close friend Handel, this is a shame; Mattheson may be faulted for occasional drudgery (the Gigue of Suite X, the Overture of Suite XII), but much of the music contained in these twelve suites is very beautiful indeed, and arguably rivals that of his more famous colleagues.

Mattheson knew well both French and Italian style, and composed in the mixed German style described by theorists such as F.W. Marpurg. Courantes throughout are, despite their names, generally of the Italian type, although Suite IV pairs an Italianate movement with a "Courante à la Francoise". A few of the gigues are of the French type (Suite II), although most are Italianate. Colin Booth's performance of the pieces acknowledges both the French and Italian elements of the music. Inégalité is employed where appropriate, and the performer occasionally even adds a petite reprise to good effect (as in the Sarabande of Suite X, although not in the Courante of Suite XII, where a piano indication perhaps mostly clearly invites a true petite reprise). Where more Italianate abandon is called for, Booth feels free to add

passagi and tirati, all to generally good effect. Throughout, the playing is fleet, spirited, and assured (sometimes perhaps even too much so the added ornamentation to the Sarabande of Suite VIII threatens to rob the movement of its simple dignity and singing character).

Booth has used two harpsichords of his own making for this recording: a two-manual instrument modelled on the surviving single by Christian Vater, and an instrument based on the Antoine Vaudry harpsichord in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Seeing that this music has a decidedly French stamp, these instruments are appropriate choices for this music, and allow it to be heard to good effect. The brass-strung Vater is wonderfully resonant, and features a beautiful buff stop that achieves a most convincing lute-like effect in Suite X. The iron-strung Vaudry, with its somewhat brighter sound and quicker decay, brings an appealing brightness and crispness. Booth explores the full colour possibility of these instruments, including using the 4' as a solo stop, and combining the buff stop with another 8' for striking harp-like effects. Considering the German and English penchants for colour stops, these are welcome and appropriate options for Mattheson's music. Indeed, Booth's full exploration of the instruments at hand echoes the words of the English publisher of these suites who noted in his preface that the harpsichord "is an Instrument yet capable of Greater Improvement, so the following Pieces claim a Precedence to all others of this Nature; not only that they are Composed by one of the Greater Masters of the Age in a Tast[e] altogether Pleasing and Sublime, but as they are peculiarly adapted to that Instrument....". Colin Booth is to be commended for committing this interesting music to disc, and one can only hope that this recording will serve as an invitation to explore the work of a composer whose observations on the activities of others need not eclipse his own impressive musical accomplishments.

**Sergei Istomin -cello and
Viviana Sofronitsky - pianoforte.
"Felix Mendelssohn: Complete
works for cello and pianoforte."
Passacaille Records 947, 2008.
Reviewed by Kenneth Mobbs**

Written between 1829 and 1845, these compositions, including the two important sonatas of 1838 and 1843, sit more or less midway in the sequence of German/Austrian cello masterworks stemming from Beethoven's early opus 5 of 1796 through to Brahms' late opus 99 of 1886.

A tidy mind might innocently expect that, for clarity, the complete works of a particular genre of composition be presented in chronological order. But here Gilbertian topsy-turvydom prevails. The opening tracks in fact commence with the last two works written, namely the very charming little "Song without words" of 1845 followed by the impressive, but at times rather relentless second Sonata in D Major of two years earlier.

In order of composition then, the first work was the Variations concertantes, written for Mendelssohn's cellist brother Paul just before the composer's 20th birthday. It charmingly sets the pair against one another in friendly rivalry. The simple basic tonal structure of the theme is varied quite freely and the sectional nature of the form blurred very effectively by occasional variations overlapping from one into the next. The expansive coda has the feeling of a free improvisation before allowing the two friends to be reconciled in a peaceful, balanced ending. Altogether a little gem of a work.

The fortepiano used is a visually elegant Paul McNulty copy of a Graf of c.1819, meticulously researched and tuned to modern pitch. Its array of effects even includes two strengths of moderator, as well as the una corda and sustaining pedals, though the "Turkish" element is not present. Even so, the dynamic range used feels too oppressive when heard in the loudest section of the otherwise delicate second movement of the first sonata. The piano brilliantly passes the test posed by the fast repeated notes in the last movement. But in the interesting harp-like extended arpeggios of the opening of the third movement of the second sonata, as well as in the vigorous outer movements of both sonatas (and indeed in similar parts of the Variations), one could have wished for the extra sustaining powers of a later Viennese instrument, or, bearing in mind the composer's close association with England, something by Broadwood or Stodart. But preferably not an original: for even though the piano here was a "mere" copy, one felt for the instrument under the onslaughts of the pianist's vigorous left hand.

Recording engineers usually favour over-resonant buildings which are, however, particularly inimical to the detailed articulations and phrasings so essential for effective stylistic interpretations of chamber music. Through this present recording's aural fog one can discern two well-matched, technically-secure players. Occasionally the cellist is over-keen to get the maximum detailed expression out of individual notes at the expense of the musical logic of the larger phrase, but one can but admire the commitment of both performers.