

Harpsichord & *fortepiano*

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BOOK REVIEWS

Aliénor Harpsichord Competition: The 2000 Composition Winners.

(Published by Wayne Leupold Editions, 2007). WL600233.

Reviewed by John Collins

This volume contains four multi-movement pieces by the winners of the fifth Aliénor harpsichord competition held in 2000.

The first piece is the *Pequeno Suite Brasileiro* (Little Brazilian Suite) by the Brazilian composer Dmitri Cervo, born in 1968. The first movement is an attractive Samba with its insistent rhythm interrupted only occasionally; the Cantiga de Roda has a RH melody, which reappears in thirds, over LH quavers throughout. The following Dança Negra opens in 16/16, divided into four groups of three semiquavers plus one of four, before moving into 14/16 (not 14/8 as marked), 15/16, 16/16 and finishing in 17/16. The Cantiga de Cego is a lilting largo in 12/8 in two voices; Capoeira in 4/4 has a rhythmically marked figure throughout and is again in two voices with the final Desafio having rapid repeated semiquavers in the LH over which a melodic line unfolds, mainly in semiquavers but with a few bars of quavers. Some writing in thirds makes this a tricky movement in which to maintain the momentum clearly. These pieces are markedly diatonic with the occasional chromatic touches.

Rudy Davenport, born in 1948, considers the harpsichord as a welcome alternative to the modern piano. His set of *Seven Innocent Dances* opens with a movement that is surely derived from the style of the French clavecinistes with its arpeggiated figures marked as either "Hold all notes" or "Hold all notes except the bass". The second dance has crotchet chords in the LH against a melodic RH with much rhythmic variety. The third switches between 2/4, 3/4, 4/4 and 5/4 and is written in two voices, with LH notes meant to be held, again being notated as such; the title "With Playfulness" is reflected most successfully in the writing. The fourth, entitled "With Excitement" has crossed hands almost throughout, the fifth is a mini-toccata in B minor with non-stop semiquavers in the RH over a LH of semibreves with a tenor in quaver plus crotchets, with one bar of syncopated octaves and one of an arpeggio dotted minim of a 7+9 chord. The sixth dance "With Pomposity" in 3/4 has some melodic writing and some repeated chords, the final dance again showing

homage to the Baroque with its arpeggiated figuration carefully written out in style brisé.

Kent Holliday, born in 1940, submitted a set of six dances entitled "From Colca Canyon", representing six of the fourteen Spanish colonial towns constructed in Peru in the seventeenth century. The first piece, "Calalli", is a fast piece in 6/8 with RH quavers over LH quavers which build up into dissonant chords. "Coporaque" is another insistent work with rich rhythmic variety starting in 7/8 and including 5/8 and 8/8; chords in the LH of octaves and fifth sound beneath a perpetuo quaver RH with many bare fifths to make this an ear-catching piece. The third piece, "Yanque" contains RH writing including fourths and sixths with carefully marked articulation; the LH is mainly bare-fifth crotchet chords. "Achoma" is a slow piece opening with a two-voice dotted rhythm which continues in quaver chords before a return, the piece finishing with a short cadenza-like flourish with the allocation between the hands being indicated. The most interesting part of "Pinchollo" sees the RH move in quavers over fifths in the LH creating effective dissonances. The final piece, "Maca", is a lively gigue-like movement in predominantly two-voice texture in another rhythmic kaleidoscope including 6/8, 9/8 and the occasional interjection of bars in 5/8.

Timothy Tikker, born 1958, composed "Three Bulgarian dances", the first one, "Pravo", being a lively 6/8 with single voice flowing quavers in the RH over LH chords leading to a central section in 2/4, with overlapping notes written carefully in the RH over syncopations in the LH. Good use is made of the top octave. "Lesnoto" is in 7/8 (3+4 quavers in RH over long held notes in the bass and other rhythmic figures in the LH) as is "Ruchesnita", the RH here being three crotchet chords plus quaver over a LH of quaver rest followed by three + three quavers. Again, much use is made of wide intervals between the hands.

One requirement of the composers, who submitted pieces for the competition, was that in order to sustain interest the music had to demonstrate originality and ingenuity and be neither too easy nor too difficult. This collection of pieces certainly fulfils the first requirement by offering a wide variety of styles while keeping in many instances to the basic form of the dance, and will provide a most welcome addition to

the repertoire of modern pieces that display an idiomatic understanding of the demands of successful writing for the harpsichord. While there are several dissonant moments, none of them should alienate the listener. Apart from the Dances by Timothy Tikker which all run to four pages, none of the pieces covers more than two pages thus obviating page turning problems. The difficulty varies from considerable (much of it being the necessity of grappling with time signatures outside of the normal simple and duple) to about grade 6; several of the pieces can be regarded as études covering a specific technical point. Although some pieces are marked for two manuals they can all be played on a one-manual instrument with a five octave compass. Of great assistance is the CD included with the book of Elaine Funaro playing these pieces plus the Suite Española by Timothy Brown. It is to be hoped that these pieces will find their way into recital programmes and that Wayne Leupold will be encouraged to produce further such collections of pieces that combine musicality and accessibility for both player and listener.

Beethoven, Piano Sonata no. 15 in D Major, op. 28 (Pastoral), Ed. Norbert Gertsch and Murray Perahia; fingering by Murray Perahia, (Henle, 2008). Also by this pair: Op 14 no. 1-2, Op 26, op 31 nos 1-3, op 53, op 101. Reviewed by David Breitman

Henle Verlag, a pioneer in the publication of Urtext editions, have now embarked on a new version of the Beethoven piano sonatas. Individual sonatas edited by the team of Norbert Gertsch and Murray Perahia began appearing in 2004 - almost exactly 50 years since the "ur-Henle Urtext" of 1953, edited by Bertha Wallner. The newest effort is actually Henle's third pass at these pieces; Hans Schmidt's version appeared in 1976 as part of Henle's complete Beethoven edition.

Why do we need another edition of the Beethoven sonatas? Here's what Henle had to say in 1976, in the foreword to Schmidt's edition (it appears only in German, the translation is mine): "A new critical edition has to re-examine the known sources, and confirm or question earlier solutions." Recognizing that his is likely not to be the final word, he continues: "No edition is free of compromise. It is astonishing how many questions remain open, and will

likely remain open in the future, despite the large number of editions already published."

Schmidt's assessment is as true today as it was when his edition was published in 1976, but the claims for this newest edition are less modest. As Henle state on their website, in their blurb for op. 31 no. 3:

For half a century Henle's edition of the Beethoven sonatas - the "New Testament" of the piano repertoire - has been universally recognised as the standard starting-point for any serious study of these works. Now, with the publication of the three op. 31 sonatas in revised separate editions, we are raising the yardstick another notch: no less a musician than the pianist and conductor Murray Perahia has agreed, for the first time ever, to publish his fingerings and, as co-editor, to confide his profound insights into the sources to music lovers everywhere. The musical text has been prepared in strict accordance with the rules of modern Urtext editing, and the volume is rounded off with a lengthy and informative preface and detailed notes on sources and alternative readings.

Careful examination of this statement can tell us a lot about our current musical culture; what exactly is that "yardstick" we have been raising?

For readers of *Harpsichord and Fortepiano*, the most appreciated advance will probably be the preface and textual notes. These are indispensable for a piece like op. 28, which has two primary sources (autograph and first edition). Finally, the owners of a Henle edition can retrace the decisions made by the editor, and make their own decisions about the astonishing number of open questions referred to by Schmidt. (Interestingly, Schmidt's edition promised a separately-published Critical Report that seems never to have seen the light of day.)

Some readers may be disappointed to see that a full set of editorial fingerings is once again featured in an Urtext edition (the Schmidt edition eschewed them). My own feeling is that a true Urtext edition shouldn't provide fingerings (except, of course, for those that appear in the primary sources), although many reputable editions do provide them. (Bärenreiter may be the only major publisher to issue keyboard music with no editorial fingerings.) Henle generally use italics and footnotes to identify fingerings from the composer or from the first edition, although they make an interesting exception for the Chopin Etudes, which have so many fingerings from the composer that italics are used to denote the editor's fingerings. My problem with editorial fingerings is that I find them very difficult to ignore; I feel as if I've absorbed the editor's interpretation like mother's milk, before I've had the opportunity to think for

myself. Nonetheless, it's interesting and valuable to have Perahia's fingerings in print, where they join Schnabel's and Schenker's, among others.

Having a famous pianist associated with an edition is an old idea: before Schnabel's there had already been versions by Liszt, Moscheles and Czerny. There is of course a certain tension between the notion of an Urtext edition (the "original") and one with the imprimatur of a contemporary musician; without the Urtext imperative Schnabel was able to give interpretive advice for nearly every phrase, while Perahia's contribution is limited to fingerings and a short introductory essay. The essay is lovely, as far as it goes. He takes as his point of departure a sketch fragment, given both in facsimile and in transcription, which contains material from both the 2nd and 4th movements of the sonata; according to Perahia this "furtheres the conviction that Beethoven was consciously aware of the unity of this sonata." The essay itself is remarkably "sketchy" - it isn't given a title, and it both begins and ends *in media res*. It gave me the (charming) impression of overhearing Mr. Perahia in earnest conversation with a colleague or student, and it definitely left me wishing to hear more.

Let's turn now to the actual musical text, "prepared in strict accordance with the rules of modern Urtext editing." In general, the new edition is closer to the sources than Wallner's edition, reproducing features that, though not significant in a conventional sense, may seem suggestive to some readers/players. One such example is the pedal indications, which are given in both the autograph and the first edition as "senza sordino" (without damper[s]; i.e., take the pedal) and "con sordino" (with damper). Beethoven adopted the modern notation with the Waldstein sonata, whose composition coincided with his acquisition of the Erard piano. The pianos he had been familiar with previously would almost certainly have had a knee lever to raise the dampers, so the term "pedal" for the earlier pieces is actually anachronistic. It's a nice nod in the direction of players who will, in fact, play the piece on a piano with a knee lever. And for everyone else, there's nothing wrong with being reminded that Beethoven conceived op. 28 on an instrument quite different from today's. Interestingly, the new edition by Barry Cooper for Associated Board reverts to the conventional "Ped/* notation, despite devoting a good bit of prefatory material - and an accompanying CD - to discussing the fortepiano.)

Similarly, the placement of dynamic signs follows the sources, rather than the normal, modern practice of always placing them

between the staves. The first such example appears at the very opening of the piece: see Figure 1. Beethoven has a *p* for the left hand when it enters alone in b. 1, then another *p* for the right hand beneath the first chord of b. 2. Note that Wallner "simplified" this to a single *p*; Gerstsch/Perahia restore the composer's notation. A related example occurs at b. 132, where Wallner moves the decresc. to the middle of the grand staff, while the sources put it beneath the left hand's rising scale. Again, there's no ambiguity, but what is gained by "updating" Beethoven's notational practice?

This edition also occasionally reproduces the "zigzag" beaming found in the sources, i.e., cases where notes are printed both above and below a single beam, a practice not normally found in modern editions. Figure 2 is a good example: in Beethoven's autograph the four sets of parallel beams suggest an equivalency among the four groups of notes (and each group ascends, at least visually). The first edition preserves some of that impression, while in the modern notation of Wallner's edition the first group now descends; Gerstsch/Perahia preserve the "zigzag," but their beaming looks clumsy (demonstrating the virtue of the modern practice).

The now-familiar problem of dots and strokes (or "wedges") presents a more disturbing situation. Wallner (like all older Henle editions) uses only dots; clearly there has been a change of policy at Henle, since this is the most salient change in the "new, improved" version of the Mozart Violin sonatas that Henle issued in 1995. (In that case the original edition was dropped and the old catalog number was reassigned to the new edition.) The relevant editorial principle is stated as follows (from the "Comments" section which follows the musical text): "A 'teardrop' sign has consistently been used to indicate staccato. However, where a difference between a staccato dot and a stroke in the sources suggests a systematic or general intention, we also show this in our edition." Utilizing a third symbol rather than choosing between dots and strokes is an interesting choice (although the "teardrops" look an awful lot like strokes to me).

But in fact, teardrops are used exclusively. Evidently, "a systematic or general intention" is a pretty tough test to pass. I myself would have chosen dots in a number of cases. The first of these is "portato notation" (i.e., b. 160-162 of the first movement) - here the teardrops really look wrong; strokes almost never appear under a slur in any music (and the dots are perfectly distinct in the sources for this piece).

Figure 3 shows b. 68 of the second movement (I have also included b. 67 for another example of the zigzag.). Here the three dots over the final semiquavers of the bar seem to imply a very different touch from the regular, "stroke" staccato of the basic accompaniment figure (although, in the editors' defense one could argue that they are simply "cautionary" indications, reminding the player that these notes, too, are to be played *sempre staccato* as indicated four bars previously). A third case, b. 142, is perhaps the most interesting (see Figure 4). The autograph reveals a correction at this spot: a slur has been erased, and the two dots (or strokes) aren't even properly aligned with the notes to which they presumably refer (first two crotchets of the bar). In the first edition, there are distinct dots over the second and third crotchets (the first crotchet, tied from the previous bar, has no dot or stroke). The dots contrast clearly with the pattern of strokes on the crotchets of beats one and two established in the left hand at b. 136. As a result, b. 142 has distinct articulations for the left and right hands - a distinction which seems very logical and musical. My guess is that the original edition reflects a later correction by Beethoven (the engraver's copy has been lost). The right hand "dotted" crotchets are the light notes which release the tension of the syncope of the previous three bars; the left hand's "stroked" crotchets are the steady ticking of the pulse. The repetition, with the right hand in octaves, is not consistent in the original edition, and the recapitulation brings problems of its own, but I resent having that suggestive detail removed, even if it doesn't meet the standard of a "systematic or general intention."

Here is another sentence from the statement of editorial principles: "Signs missing from the sources but deemed necessary by the editors have been added in parentheses." This is a better policy than simply adding the signs "silently," but I'm still suspicious of this kind of intervention. I found only five examples, but they are worth examining in detail because these are the spots where the editor's hand is most noticeable:

First movement, b. 35: a slur over the entire bar (quaver arpeggio) is suggested in parentheses, presumably by analogy with the otherwise identical b. 27.¹ While the particular bars in question are identical, their contexts differ. Mightn't the difference in articulation reflect a difference in function? And I find it suggestive that in the recapitulation, where Beethoven composes a variant for the equivalent of b. 35, the articulations are reversed: first un-slurred, then slurred.²

First movement, b. 250 and 254: here there are inconsistencies in the ties in the left hand. The pattern repeats three times, but the original edition and the autograph show a tie for the upper F# only the second time. The new edition supplies parenthetical ties for the first and third instances of the pattern. Here the editors may be right; repeating the note may work against the *pp* dynamic. (Wallner gives ties for all three without comment.) But surely any player capable of playing *op. 28* is also capable of deciding whether this was an oversight. (Maybe the tie is the mistake, and the F# should be repeated all three times?)³ Second movement, b. 77: there is a parenthetical *p*. This is certainly a problematic spot: there is a *cresc.* in b. 75 and another in b. 78; something should probably cancel the first *cresc.* before the arrival of the next one. But why couldn't it just as well be a *dim.* in b. 76? Again, this seems like a judgment for the player, not the editor (as the Wallner edition treats it).⁴ Fourth movement, b. 47, parenthetical *sf* for the third instance of a pattern. Why might this not be intentional, with the third iteration beginning weaker, in order to drive to the end of the phrase?⁵

The remaining parenthetical indications involve rests that occur in middle voices, such as bars 29 and 148 of the fourth movement. This is an area where keyboard music is often inconsistent, but not ambiguous; it's purely a matter of visual presentation. Sometimes the presence of each and every voice's rests gives a cluttered impression; sometimes their absence looks a little odd. Certainly the use of parentheses for these cases is perfectly justified.

These are small, perhaps trivial details, and Mr Gertsch's judgments are eminently reasonable. But, in my opinion, an opportunity was missed. What if the note had said "parentheses have been used to indicate Mr Perahia's solution to some puzzling aspects of Beethoven's notation"? Difficult cases like these (Schmidt's "open questions") are, in the end, questions of taste, and having a performer of Mr Perahia's stature weigh in would have given this edition special cachet. I would prefer that the editors not supply additional signs to resolve ambiguities as "deemed necessary"; I'd rather tackle those problems myself, but Mr Perahia's opinion would make a valuable contribution.

What edition, then, should a serious student or professional use for the Beethoven sonatas?

This new edition (especially once it's complete) would be an excellent choice, and is a worthy successor to the Wallner edition, which has set the standard for the past fifty

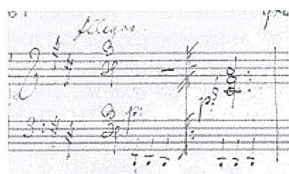
years. The text is beautifully laid out, and the critical commentary alone renders the older Henle edition obsolete. (The Associated Board goes one better, though, by laying the critical commentary into the binding separately, so one can have the text and the commentary open side by side.) Perahia's fingerings look interesting, although I would continue to look up Schnabel's, as well.

Scholarly-minded performers should consider playing from the beautiful facsimile of the first edition published by Tecla - but not without consulting the Critical Commentary² **from the Henle edition under review!**

(Endnotes)

- 1 Wallner's edition looks very different in this spot, because she replaces Beethoven's two slurs with a single one. Apparently this was considered appropriate since the last note of the first slur (the final note of b. 26) is tied to the first note of the second slur (the first note of b. 27).
- 2 Available for download from the Henle website.

Figure 1: i/I (placement of dynamic markings)



Autograph



First edition

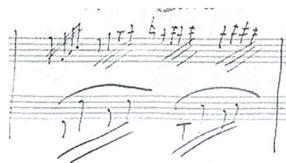


Wallner



Gertsch/Perahia

Figure 2: ii/51 ("Zigzag")



Autograph



First edition



Wallner



Gertsch/Perahia

Figure 3: ii/67-8: ("zigzag"; dots vs strokes)

Autograph



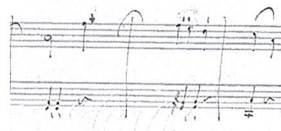
First edition



Wallner



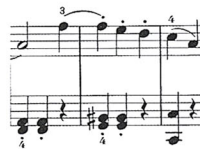
Gertsch/Perahia

Figure 4: i/141-2:

Autograph



First edition



Wallner



Gertsch/Perahia

Figure 5: ii/64-5, 68



Autograph



First edition



Gertsch/Perahia

Peter Watchorn. *Isolde Ahlgrimm, Vienna and the Early Music Revival*. (Ashgate: Surrey, 2007). Reviewed by Garry Broughton

"Wien, du Stadt meiner Träume" - Siczynsky

This is an important and much needed book, a thorough "life and works" of a major pioneer in the early music revival -the Viennese fortepianist and harpsichordist Isolde Ahlgrimm (1914-1995), the first artist to perform and record nearly everything J.S. Bach wrote for the harpsichord (solo, chamber and concertante works) with "profoundly musical playing that was stylistically years ahead of its time."¹ Peter Watchorn, who is well known and celebrated as an interpreter of J.S. Bach, studied with Ahlgrimm for eight years and it is thanks to him that this great musician, "a missing link in our evolution toward reconstructing historical instruments and playing styles"² who "has been largely air-brushed out of musical history"³ is now restored to us in words and pictures if not in sound. It is a pity that, considering the high price of this book, a disc giving some idea of Ahlgrimm's playing is not included, since very few of her many recordings are still available.

The gist of this book and ten of its photographs will already be known to many readers of *Harpsichord & Fortepiano*, thanks to a long article by Peter Watchorn which appeared in Vol. 6 no. 2 (Nov. 1997), followed by four of the book's appendices in Vol. 7 no. 1 (June 1998). Although Watchorn began writing the book with Ahlgrimm as "an active, though initially reluctant, collaborator", it was only after her death in 1995 at the age of 81, that he felt able to present a more complete picture of her life with "the restoration of Erich Fiala to his rightful place in the story". Fiala was the Svengali-like figure (Ahlgrimm's own description) who, sensing her potential, decided that she would be the perfect vehicle for presenting his passionate belief in a more authentic performance of baroque and classical music to a wider musical public. Fiala's money enabled him to further this aim by acquiring a collection of antique instruments that ultimately contained over 600 items, including 14 keyboard instruments.

Having conceived the idea of a series of concerts (to be entitled "Concerte für Kenner und Liebhaber") featuring 18th-century music played on period instruments, Ahlgrimm and Fiala sourced a suitable piano for Mozart and Haydn, a Rosenberger 1790, upon which she played. Mozart's D Minor Fantasy K397 and the Sonata K331 at the first concert in February 1937.

The series continued for the next 19 years with a total of 60 concerts, most of which had to be repeated to accommodate the huge demand. From 1939 to 1952 the concerts included two celebrated Bach cycles and a Mozart cycle (all of the sonatas, rondos and fantasias). The concert series ended when Ahlgrimm's relationship with Fiala finally broke down in 1956. Fiala, though enthusiastic, was not a trained professional, and it was his insistence on conducting which eventually led to the breakdown of the series and to their marriage.

As well as Bach on the harpsichord and Mozart on the Rosenberger, Ahlgrimm played Beethoven on his Erard (restored in 1940), Schumann on Clara Schumann's Conrad Graf and music by Richard Strauss (a personal friend) on the modern piano. This friendship led to Ahlgrimm appearing as the on-stage harpsichordist in the Viennese premiere of Strauss's final opera *Capriccio* in 1944.⁴ Subsequent collaboration with Strauss resulted in a small number of solo harpsichord works by major 20th-century composers such as Strauss's "Capriccio Suite". Unfortunately Watchorn claims (p. 71) that Norman del Mar's account of this⁵ is "not strictly accurate" but neither is his own account despite that fact that he prints Ahlgrimm's own accurate description of the events as Appendix 7.

In addition to the Rosenberger, the Ahlgrimm-Fiala collection also contained, at various times, Viennese fortepianos by Ferdinand Hofmann c. 1780, Samesch c. 1830, André Stein 1819, J.B. Streicher 1840, Anton Walter 1787 and 1780, and two square piano by Christian Baumann and Walter c.1790. Unfortunately, there were no equivalently authentic harpsichords for Ahlgrimm's Bach playing; her enlightened musicology was not matched by the instruments available. When she played Bach on the harpsichord for the first time at the fourth "Kenner und Liebhaber" concert on 3 December 1938, it was on a newly constructed (1937) unhistorical Gebrüder Ammer (Alois and Michael) double manual (upper: 8', 4', lower 8' 16', with leather plectra) and for her famous Bach recordings (for Philips 1951) she continued to use this harpsichord and a similar 1941 instrument by the Ammer brothers together with a separate Ammer pedal harpsichord (16', 8', 4', 2 ½ octaves). By the time Ahlgrimm finished her Bach recordings in 1957, makers such as Rainer Schütze, Martin Skowronek, Frank Hubbar and William Dowd were building exclusively in the historically authentic style, and many performers were keen to abandon the "plucking piano".⁶

Ahlgrimm had to wait until 1975 to record⁷ on a historically informed instrument, a 1972 French style double by David Rubio similar to one which she had purchased in 1974. Her one recording (four suites by Handel) on an original historic instrument, the 1599 Ruckers in the Handel-Haus, Halle, was compromised by the harpsichord's "truly pitiful condition"⁸

Landowska (who died in 1959) never made the transition from her beloved Pleyel to a more authentic instrument but that other great pioneer of the harpsichord (and clavichord) revival, Violet Gordon Woodhouse (1871-1948) actually started off on one, in 1899!, a Thomas Culliford 1785 (workshop of Longman and Broderip), albeit restored and modified by Dolmetsch. Violet with the Dolmetsch family performed the Bach Concerto in C for three harpsichords, with single strings (all historic) at a concert in London (14 December 1899) more than half a century before the Bach concerto recordings of Ahlgrimm (1955-6) and Leonhardt (1966-7).

When it came to the Mozart bi-centenary celebrations in 1956, many were hoping that Philips would ask Ahlgrimm to record the solo fortepiano music which she had been performing so successfully. That this did not happen Watchorn attributes to a general prejudice against the fortepiano, plus the emotional turmoil from the build-up to her divorce in 1956, but other record companies such as D.G. Archiv Produktion (with Neumeyer, Berger, Scholz and Hansen) and Nixa (with Badura-Skoda), had produced several LPs of Mozart on fortepiano before 1956; sadly, Ahlgrimm seems to have left us only one Mozart recording, the concerto for harpsichord K107 on an Amadeo LP entitled "Salzburger Hofmusik". In the 1970s, when Philips did decide that the fortepiano was marketable, they turned to a younger Viennese musician, Ingrid Haebler (b. 1929), who recorded, on a Neupert 1956 fortepiano after Stein, Walther et al, the complete sonatas and concertos of J.C. Bach and a disc of early Mozart concertos (K. 37, 39, 40, and 41). Ironically, Haebler was accompanied by Ahlgrimm's erstwhile colleague Eduard Melkus and his Capella Antiqua Wien. Two other Viennese artists were directly inspired by Ahlgrimm's fortepiano playing: Jörg Demus recorded several Mozart concertos on instruments by Schantz and Gröber, and Paul Badura-Skoda recorded the complete Mozart sonatas and some klavierstücke on his own Schantz of 1790.

Having started off by spearheading the reaction against the prevalent Bach style of

the first half of the twentieth century, Ahlgrimm found herself in the 1970s increasingly at odds with the playing style of younger harpsichordists, so she used her keynote address as senior member of the jury at the Brugge harpsichord competition of 1977 to present a detailed critique of "present-day performance practice of baroque music." As Howard Schott reported in *Early Music*⁹, she quietly dropped "a succession of bombshells", attacking "the false and exaggerated trendy notions which have spread among harpsichordists in recent years." The full text of Ahlgrimm's lecture¹⁰ is printed in Watchorn's book as Appendix 9 (not 8, as footnote 36, p. 151 states) and remains a valuable research document. Not in the printed text but reported by Schott was Ahlgrimm's concluding exhortation to students to avoid imitating their teachers or favourite players "as long as possible". This was probably aimed at the pupils of fellow jury member Gustav Leonhardt, for Ahlgrimm was known to be critical of the Dutch school of micro-articulation. Leonhardt, on the other hand, thought Ahlgrimm's playing was under-articulated: commenting on her Goldberg Variations at Brugge 1977, he said, "There was no articulation, of course, but the musicianship was just superb."¹¹

At several points in the book, one can detect a tendency for Watchorn to emphasise Ahlgrimm's achievements by disparaging those of Leonhardt, suggesting that the latter was able to rise to greater eminence thanks to advantages Ahlgrimm did not have. As early as p. 22, Watchorn sets up a contrast between them depicting Leonhardt as living "a gentlemanly existence in one of the great houses of Amsterdam" thanks to "more than a little money of his own", whereas publicity photos of Ahlgrimm show her "in the kitchen wearing an apron, like any dutiful Wiener Hausfrau." Watchorn seems to have momentarily forgotten that Ahlgrimm's partner for 20 years was someone with a considerable income from the family business, enabling them to maintain large apartments in Innsbruck as well as Vienna, where the music room seated over 100.

What Watchorn describes as "the controversy over 'The Art of Fugue'"¹² involving the two museums began with Ahlgrimm giving a public lecture in 1950 on "The Art of Fugue" as a keyboard work (referring to the conclusions of Steglich, Tovey and Husmann) and announcing that she would give the first performance in Vienna of the work on the harpsichord as part of her second Bach cycle in 1951-2. Her thunder was stolen by the 22-year-old Leonhardt who

had just arrived in Vienna to study, and who, just six weeks after Ahlgrimm's announcement, made his concert debut in the city with "The Art of Fugue" on the harpsichord. Then in 1952, guided by Ahlgrimm's research, he published his own essay on the work, thus establishing his credentials as a scholar-performer. In 1953 both artists recorded the work and in 1969 they both re-recorded it. Ahlgrimm (still using her 1937 Ammer) for Tudor and Leonhardt (on the Dulcken inspired Skowronek he had been using since 1962) for Deutsche Harmonia Mundi.

There are some problems that need to be pointed out. Bizarrely, Watchorn contradicts his statement on p. 83 that Leonhardt's performance of the "Art of Fugue" in 1950 was the first by stating on p. 118 that Ahlgrimm's 1952 performance presented it "for the first time in Vienna on the harpsichord." This is just one of a very large number of cases of bad, or rather, non-editing that disfigure this book: Facts and opinions are repeated ad nauseam, there are factual inaccuracies, the index has mistakes and omissions, footnotes appear that don't match or just repeat the text, and all this despite the fact that the author thanks two editors for their help. Ashgate should be deeply ashamed of this production. To list all the faults would be tiresome, as tiresome as, for example, being told three times in less than one page of text that Ahlgrimm expanded her second Bach cycle by including "The Art of Fugue" (p.80-1).

Watchorn writes¹³ that the discography is complete, but he omits two recordings on which Ahlgrimm plays harpsichord continuo. She accompanies Elisabeth Schwarzkopf in her famous 1957 recording of "Sheep may safely graze" (Cantata 208) which is still available from EMI or Testament and as an MP3 download. She also plays continuo on an important and delightful D. G. Archiv recording of 1968 entitled "Polnisch-hanakische Volksmusik in Werken Georg Philipp Telemann" (Stereo LP 198467).

According to Brian Robins, a number of her Bach recordings (including the English and French Suites) are available, either as CDs or to download, from www.baroquecds.com/orderbg.html. One of her Bach concerto recordings is available: the double concertos BWV1060/1-2 with Hans Pischner and the Staatskapelle Dresden under Kurt Redel (1966, reissued 2002 on Edel Classics 0002572ccc).

Although this book's production values fall far short of Ahlgrimm's own high standards as a musician, it does largely succeed in its stated aims of restoring Ahlgrimm to her rightful position in the early music revival and of showing that Vienna was "a crucially

important outpost of that revival."¹⁴ Yet the Vienna Academy was not where Ahlgrimm was first introduced to the harpsichord and early music. The person responsible for that was Juliette Matton Pain-Parré, music teacher in the little village school where the 16-year-old Ahlgrimm spent three months in 1930; this was in the ultra-conservative seaside resort of Frinton-on-Sea on England's East Coast. Madame Pain-Parré said that Ahlgrimm was "born to play the harpsichord" and wanted her to join her professional early music ensemble in London, but at that time young Isolde dreamed only of being a "very famous pianist" and instead of joining the already 40-year-old early music scene in London, went back to Vienna to start her own revolution a few years later.

(Endnotes)

- 1 Brian Robins, *Early Music Review* 130 (May 2008): 8.
- 2 Penelope Crawford, foreword, xiii.
- 3 Brian Robins, *Early Music Review* 130 (May 2008): 8.
- 4 Conducted by Karl Böhm with the great Maria Cebotari as the Countess.
- 5 Norman del Mar, *Richard Strauss*, vol. 3 (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1972)
- 6 For an account of how Gustav Leonhardt's love of driving his mother's new car led him to Skowronek's door in 1956, see Martin Skowronek, *Cembalobau* (Bochinsky: Bergkirchen, 2003), 131.
- 7 One last Bach recording for Philips.
- 8 Watchorn, 145.
- 9 Oct 1997.
- 10 As translated by Schott for *The Diapason* (April 1982) with Ahlgrimm's musical examples transcribed by Mahan Estfahani (2006).
- 11 Watchorn, 150.
- 12 Watchorn, 118.
- 13 Watchorn, 26.
- 14 Watchorn, 162.

RECORDINGS

**Bart van Oort, (fortepiano after
Walter c. 1795 by Chris Maene).
"Hädyn: Klavierstücke" (complete).
[Brilliant Classics 93770]. 5 CDs.
Reviewed by Brian Robins**

CD 1: Arietta in E Flat with 12 var., Hob XVII/3. Variations (Fantasy) in F Minor, Hob XVII/6.
Arietta No. 2 with 20 var. Hob XVII/2. 4 Var. on "Gott erhalte", Hob XVII: Anhang, 5 Var. in D,
Hob XVII/7. 6 Var. in C, Hob XVII/5

CD 2: 12 Menuets, Hob IX/8. March in E Flat, Hob XVIII/1. 12 Menuets, Hob IX/3. March in C, Hob VIII/2. 12 Menuets, Hob IX/11. March in E Flat, Hob VIII/3, 3bis. 12 German Dances, Hob IX/12. Kontretanz in D, Hob XXXIc/17b

CD 3: Fantasy in C, Hob XVII/4. Adagio in F, Hob XVII/9. Capriccio in G "Acht Sauschneider müssen sein", Hob XVII/1. Sonata in D, Hob XVII/D1. Sonata in F, Hob XVII/a:1 for 4 hands "Il maestro e scolare". 18 Menuets and Aria, Hob IX/20 & Hob XVII/1.

CD 4: Arrangement from a Musical Clock. Arrangements from Symphonies.
Arrangements from "La Vera Constanza", Hob XXVIII/8. Arrangements from String Quartets.
Arrangements from Piano Trios.

CD 5: Die sieben letzten Worte unseres Erlösers am Kreuze, Hob XX/2

The composition of keyboard music occupied Haydn throughout much of his creative life, a period that spans some 35 years from the start of his employment at the Esterházy court (the early 1760s) until the mid-1790s. At the heart of the keyboard works lie the sonatas, but there is also a smaller group of miscellaneous pieces and arrangements of orchestral works, many made by the composer himself. It is these that form the contents of the present set. The performer, the Dutch fortepianist Bart van Oort, was one of four players involved in Brilliant Classics' complete recording of the sonatas (issued as a box set) and he has also recorded Haydn's trios for the same company with his Van Swieten Trio.

Not the least of the assets of the present set is van Oort's intelligent note, the discussion of the thorny problem of what instrument Haydn had in mind for his keyboard works being particularly valuable for its clear sighted approach. Van Oort rightly points out that until 1790, when Haydn made it clear that for

composition purposes he had abandoned the harpsichord for good, we can only conjecture the identity of the instrument he expected for individual works. As a generalisation James Webster's revised *New Grove* article seems as good a guideline as we can expect: he suggests that works composed in the 1760s may be seen as intended for the harpsichord, those dating from the '70s may mostly be regarded as for harpsichord or specifically designed for neither, while the 1780s witnessed a decisive turn to the fortepiano. It is perhaps therefore a pity, that in a set including both early and late works, and seemingly designed to have documentary value, that van Oort has chosen to play all this music on a single instrument, a copy of a Walter made around the time Haydn ceased to compose keyboard music. Neither does it appear that for most of the time the instrument has been recorded to the best of its advantage, for the sound captured in the Hervormde Kerk, Rhoon, in the Netherlands takes on a hard, clangorous edge in more forceful music. Curiously, this seems less apparent in *The Seven Last Words*, by some months the earliest of the recordings, where the engineer seems to have initially obtained a rounder, warmer sonority.

Possibly not entirely coincidentally, *The Seven Last Words*, an arrangement of the orchestral original composed for Cádiz Cathedral in 1786-7, can also be accounted one of the finest performances here, with van Oort engaged by the music to a degree not always apparent elsewhere. From the outset there is an impressive expressive range, the juxtaposition of profound pain and consolation in the third sonata (*Mulier, ecce filius tuus/Mother, behold thy son*), for example, movingly delineated, while the bleak emptiness and harsh violence of Sonata 5 (*Sittio/I thirst*) are chillingly captured.

The most impressive original music is principally to be found on the first CD, which includes what many would consider not only one of Haydn's finest keyboard works, the F-Minor *Andante con variazione* (1793), but also one of the most beguiling: the 12 Variations in E Flat (c. 1770-4). Van Oort's playing of both is characterised by the nimble finger work he displays throughout these discs, but it is difficult at times to escape the impression that an element of the prosaic has also crept in. This applies particularly to the E Flat Variations, where the charmingly sentimental theme seems to work better at the slower tempo taken by Andreas Staier, who also includes the F Minor work and the Variations on "Gott erhalte" (1797-9) on his DHM disc. But Van Oort rises to the drama of the extraordinarily impassioned,

fantasia-like coda of the Andante, one of the most striking passages in late 18th-century keyboard music. The other big work on this opening disc, Hob XVII/2, is a virtuoso set of variations whose busy writing seems clearly to call for the harpsichord or clavichord; the densely notated final variation especially sounded swamped. The third disc opens with two brief, but splendid works: the Fantasy in C of 1789, here spoiled by some imprecise playing of its ornamental figuration, and the F Major Adagio, a serious minded little pearl played by van Oort with considerable sensitivity.

Individual reactions to most of the remainder of the music will vary. There are some early pieces of little importance (cf. the rudimentary Hob XVII/D1, almost certainly one of the earliest of Haydn's extant keyboard works), but the majority of it consists of arrangements of orchestral music. There is, of course, nothing intrinsically wrong with such arrangements, and CD 4, with excerpts from symphonies, quartets and piano trios mostly arranged by the composer makes for fairly enjoyable listening, but it is difficult to imagine many turning very frequently to CD2, with its endless selection of minuets (there are 48 of them! - not to mention another large, probably mostly spurious batch on CD4). As with many arrangements, the music is probably quite fun to play; fun to listen to on a CD it is not.

It will be apparent from the foregoing that this is a set of mixed virtues, both as to performance and musical value. The bargain price is an attraction that may override the fact that all but the fervent Haydn collector would want simply the best items restricted to a single disc.

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