

# Harpsichord & *fortepiano*

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# REVIEWS

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## RECORDINGS

**Title: "John Kitchen plays Handel Overtures on the 1755 Kirkman harpsichord from the Raymond Russell Collection"**

**Performer: John Kitchen, harpsichord**

**Label: Delphian Records LC 12979**

**Reviewed by Grant Colburn**

Surely it has been a "banner year" for a whole new bumper crop of Handel recordings and performances with this being the 250th anniversary of his death. But it isn't like one really needs an excuse to release a new recording of Handel's music, who certainly would come in on everyone's "Top Five Composers List of Baroque Masters." However, unlike perhaps the endless new performances of Messiah or his concertos, this new recording by John Kitchen represents an underplayed area of Handel's work, namely a disc devoted to the keyboard arrangements of Handel's overtures from his operas and oratorios. And on his new disc put out by Delphian records, Kitchen gives us eight of these overtures in their arranged form played on the stunningly beautiful 1755 Kirkman harpsichord from the Raymond Russell Collection.

In his well written and detailed liner notes Kitchen mentions that five keyboard transcriptions of overtures exist in Handel's own hand while Handel scholar Terence Best makes the argument that the composer was probably responsible for about 20 of the over 60 arrangements now known. Interestingly enough though when it comes to this disc, only two of the recorded arrangements are considered to have been done by Handel and neither are part of the five mentioned autographs. The rest seem to be from unknown arrangers though a third overture, that for the opera Rinaldo, was arranged by harpsichord virtuoso and Handel contemporary William Babell. Also noteworthy from the liner notes is just how popular arrangements such as these were not only in their day but also through the 19th and into the 20th centuries. An interesting and fascinating study as well could be had from one having the original orchestral scores available as well as recordings to make a comparison between the symphonic settings and the solo keyboard versions provided here.

As to the performances themselves the fine quality of the harpsichord is skillfully matched by Kitchen's style and playing. Especially noteworthy is Kitchen's ability to use the available sounds and stops on

the Kirchman to evoke the textures of the original works, along with the natural and full live sound achieved by its recording in St. Cecilia's Hall in Edinburgh. Photos provided in the CD booklet provide for a nice bit of a behind the scenes look at the room and the recording process.

Along with the eight overtures included here are also recordings of two of Handel's suites, HWV 454 in A and also HWV 450 in G. These are played upon an earlier single-manual harpsichord built by Thomas Barton in 1709 (formerly in the Roger Mirrey Collection) which as the liner notes indicate is one of a very few English harpsichords extant from the early 18th century. The quality of the instrument as well as the playing are again top notch though one does have to wonder about the inclusion of the suites on this disc. Surely if, as Kitchen states in his liner notes, "Handel shows endless resource in these works; although almost all are French overtures, the variety is remarkable," a complete disc of overtures would have been an option. One can conjecture though that the inclusion may have arisen due to a desire to showcase this other fine instrument which though excellent in its sound quality may not have had quite the big sonority required for the overtures. However this in no way takes anything away from the final collection of music provided here and may in spite of their "remarkable variety" offer the listener a bit of an escape from the sound and style of the overture settings.

There is much to recommend for this new recording, both for fans of Handel and his operas and oratorios, and also for the lovers of beautifully recorded and played period harpsichords and fine quality harpsichord music. One couldn't ask for a better offering to memorialize Handel's accomplishments 250 years after his legendary life.

**Title: "Bernardo Storace: Works for Harpsichord and Organ."**

**Performer: Jörg Halubeck**

**Label: CPO 777444-2**

**Reviewed by David Pickett**

Little is known about the composer Bernardo Storace, beyond that gleaned from the sole surviving engraved copy of his only known publication, 'Selva di varie compositioni d'intavolatura per cimbalo ed organo'. Published in Venice in 1664, this identifies the author as *Vice maestro di cappella dell' illustrissimo senato della nobile, ed esemplare*

*città di Messina*. The work is available in facsimile (S.P.E.S., 1982) and in an edition by Barton Hudson (American Institute of Musicology, 1965). There are 23 pieces in all: passacaglias, variations, toccatas, corrente, etc., 14 of which are performed here, split equally between harpsichord and organ.

The CD was recorded in 2006 in two different halls in Stuttgart. The Italian harpsichord used is from the collection of the Württemberg State Museum, and is described here as “probably built in Venice c. 1600”. It has a compass of C/E- $\text{f}^3$  and two 8-foot registers. The Italian organ, which has the same compass, with pedals, is today housed at the Stuttgart Conservatory and is also of unknown provenance: “probably from the mid-eighteenth century”. Meantone tuning is employed for both instruments at a pitch of A 440. As far as the recording is concerned, the harpsichord is rather more distant than the organ, which suffers from apparent highlighting of the positions of individual pipes, probably caused by the use of spaced microphones.

Jörg Halubek, the performer, studied in Stuttgart, Freiburg and Basel and was the first prize winner in organ at the 2004 International Bach Competition in Leipzig. He faces competition in the form of a complete recording of *Storace* on two *Tactus* CDs by the Italian player Francesco Cera on modern copies of harpsichord and spinet based on 17th-century originals, and an organ from 1680. Overall, Cera’s recording is not only more complete for little more cost, but it is more idiomatic.

Where Halubek tends to hesitate and impose his ideas on the music, with some strange changes of tempo and in one place an inexplicable rhetorical pause, Cera’s performance flows smoothly with a more lively and natural articulation. These traits can be heard in the best-known of Storace’s pieces, the *Ciacona*, in which Halubek hesitates slightly after the first note, though they are even more in evidence elsewhere. For some reason, Halubek ignores the *Grave* marking of the second section of the *Passacagli sopra Fe fa ut per b*, thereby arriving at the end nearly two minutes earlier than Cera. Cera plays this work on the organ, which undoubtedly helps to sustain the grave section, but Halubek could also have elected to do this.

Of the pieces played on organ by Halubek, the *Ballo della Battaglia* is highly successful, though elsewhere his choice of registration is not as fortunate as Cera’s, for instance in playing the *Capriccio sopra Ruggiero* entirely at 4-foot pitch, or the opening of the *Toccata e Canzon* (in F) in which Cera’s soft stops impress more than Halubek’s *organo pleno*. The harpsichord pieces include variations on *la Spagnoletta*, II .

*cinque passi* and *la Follia* which are well played. The distance of this instrument from the listener is a matter of personal preference for home listening, though this listener found the greater immediacy of Cera’s recording more engaging. There is much to enjoy here; but the competition is exceedingly strong.

**Title: “Bach Sonatas for Viola da Gamba and Harpsichord”**

**Performers: Daniel Yeadon, viola da gamba; Neal Peres de Costa, harpsichord**

**Label: ABC Classics 476 3394**

**Reviewed by**

**Jacqui Robertson-Wade**

The packaging and overall presentation of this CD is eye catching, as one would expect from ABC Classics. The image appears to be rusted iron, perhaps from a disused railway or ship, and the abstract form in which it is presented is attractive both in design and colour. The CD notes written by Neal Peres de Costa are informative and serve as a good introduction to the viol to those who are new to it. This CD is thought to be the first Australian recording of Bach’s Gamba Sonatas on period instruments.

The recording itself, although released in 2009, was made in two parts, with some movements recorded in June 2004 and others in March 2006; the venue was the Goossens Hall of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s Ultimo Centre. The first thing to impress me on listening was the clarity of sound of the instruments throughout the recording. Even difficult, complex passages are extremely clear in both instruments.

From the interaction between Daniel Yeadon and Neal Peres de Costa, it is clear these musicians have been playing together for some time as the ensemble is both conversational and exciting. There is a wholeness about the overall sound and balance that is particularly impressive when the music is virtuosic in both instruments, as is the case with these Gamba sonatas. Phrasing is interpreted with subtlety in both harpsichord and gamba, although some movements in the gamba part end with a triumphant crescendo that seems out of place in a period interpretation.

Daniel Yeadon’s playing is expressive and the virtuosity required for the gamba sonatas is easily managed. However, I couldn’t help feeling that the heaviness in the subject of the CD artwork is occasionally reflected in, at times, a “cellistic” approach to gamba playing. In places there is solidity and emphasis that does not sit easily with the delicate and polite character of the viol, and the



energy from the left hand sometimes disturbs the line with the use of more vibrato than I personally prefer, especially in the higher register. Vibrato at the end of the note is much more stylistic than at the beginning. I would prefer more shaping of the notes with the bow than with left hand vibrato in the main, and more use of *mezza di voce*. This perhaps is one of the main differences between the viol and the cello, as the viol bow hair can be tensioned with the finger to shape the note rather than using bow speed.

All the above points aside, for the sheer excitement of the ensemble I would recommend this CD.

## MUSIC SCORES

**Title:** *The Medici Harpsichord Book*

**Editor:** Aapo Häkkinen

**Publisher:** Edition Escobar, 2008

**Reviewed by** Paula Woods

The most surprising aspect of *The Medici Harpsichord Book* is without doubt the fact that it has never been published before. The manuscript has for many years been in the library of the *Conservatorio Statale di Musica Luigi Cherubini*, Florence, but despite its obvious historical interest has only been made available to the wider public thanks to the determination of Aapo Häkkinen. Häkkinen has also recorded it for Deux-Elles, so we have the opportunity to play and study both the written source, and a well-informed interpretation of them.

The original manuscript, anonymous, leather bound, and bearing the Medici coat of arms, appears to be the work of a single composer and a single copyist – not necessarily the same person. It has been dated to the late seventeenth century, although one or two of the pieces arguably sound a little later. The identity of the composer is more problematic: in view of the arms, the book clearly has a link with the Medici family, and current scholarship favours Grand Prince Ferdinando III (1663-1713) as the probable composer. Known as “Orfeo dei Principe”, Ferdinando studied counterpoint, and studied the harpsichord as a boy with Giovanni Maria Pagliardi, composer at the Medici court. Although he did not live to succeed his father, Cosimo III, Ferdinando gained a reputation during his lifetime as a discerning patron who sponsored music performance. An early admirer of Handel and Domenico Scarlatti, he also encouraged the instrument building experiments of Bartolomeo Cristofori, which ultimately led to the development of the early piano.

The 15 – mainly short – pieces, carefully written out by the copyist, carry titles such as *Preludio*, *Passagagli*, *Tochata* and *Arie alla Francese*. Häkkinen suggests that they should be regarded as comprising four suites, each unified by key signature, and containing one of these “French” airs. This reviewer does not find that entirely convincing: the first four pieces work well as a suite, with a *Preludio cantabile con Ligature*, *Passacagli*, and a choice of two *Arie alla Francese*, but thereafter one could argue that we have a series of three pairs of pieces, followed by a single *Allemanda*, and a further pair.

Either way, it probably does not matter – the player will have fun dipping into these pieces, and combining them according to personal taste. The editor describes them as “filled with richly sonorous chords, luxurious figurations and spicy dissonances”, and certainly the music strongly suggests a well-informed, amateur composer who delights in exploring the range of colour, texture and harmonies available. It also reflects an ability to create lyrical, melodic lines – if not always the skill to sustain them – and a broad familiarity with the French and Italian music of the time. One is often struck by phrases strongly reminiscent of well known composers: hints of Frescobaldi, Froberger, Louis Couperin and Scarlatti continually appear. There are echoes of the *Cento Partite* – for example in the *Passagagli Pastorale*, no 2 in the book – and the French unmeasured prelude occurs in a fully written out form (No. 5. *Preludio di Botte, Acciachature e Ligature*).

The six *Arie alla Francese* (No. 8) are an intriguing example of the composer’s eclecticism, and while the editor does not find them particularly French, other than in their structure, they often seem to convey a lilting French sensibility. With their binary form, use of dotted rhythms, and *petites reprises*, they all have great charm. This piece perhaps owes more to Scarlatti than to Couperin, and the writing out of the dotted sections betrays the fact that this convention was not so idiomatic to an Italian. Yet despite the occasional awkwardness of phrasing or modulation, they would work well if paired with a *Preludio* or *Tochata*. The final piece in the book is particularly appealing, with its accomplished chromaticism and crisp rhythms that recall Scarlatti.

The grandest – and longest – piece of the collection is the *Passagagli*. No.12 is quite a heavyweight piece, opening with eight bars of long chords, and continuing with semiquaver passages that alternate with longer dotted phrases, reminiscent of Frescobaldi. The frequent use of arpeggiated passages may imply the composer’s familiarity with *stile brisé*, or reflect a personal preference for density of colour and texture. It may also suggest

that the instrument(s) on which they were played did not sustain well. This brings us to the question of the instrument for which they were intended: Hökkinen's choice – both in his title and for his recording – is a 17th-century harpsichord, kindly made available by Christopher Hogwood, and while it would be fascinating to experiment with this music on organ or clavichord, one tends to feel that the harpsichord is indeed the most appropriate choice. An Italian harpsichord, such as the one used for the recording, encourages the player to arpeggiate the long chords that occur so often here. On a Flemish instrument, the effect is perhaps tonally too thick and lacking in clarity for some ears. On the organ, some thinning out of the denser passages might be helpful. With the clavichord, one suspects the dynamic nuances available would reveal many lyrical subtleties.

The majority of surviving Italian keyboards from the late seventeenth century commonly have a C-c3 compass, and this will accommodate all but one of the Medici pieces. Curiously, the first piece, a *Preludio Cantabile con Ligature*, calls twice for a low AA, but while this bass note is undeniably effective, it could easily be taken an octave higher. Was this a later revision – perhaps an idea of the copyist? Does it indicate an instrument with a less typical compass? If so, why is such a low note used nowhere else?

There are pieces of great interest in this collection, and it is regrettable that so far no other music is known by our anonymous composer, from a family so closely connected with the arts in Italy. This collection deserves to be widely known, for its historical as well as musical interest, and is strongly recommended to players and listeners alike. Let us hope that a facsimile edition – perhaps with a full critical commentary – will be forthcoming before too long, as this book provides a unique glimpse into the musical world of its time.

**Composer: Antoine Selsosse**

**Title: *The Selsosse MS***

**Editor: Peter Leech**

**Publisher: Edition HH, HH077**

**Title: *Balli per Cembalo***

**Editor: Christopher Hogwood**

**Publisher: Edition HH, HH075**

**Reviewed by John Collins**

The Selsosse MS, found in a London secondhand bookshop in 2004 by the editor, is most interesting and is a companion to MS 1471 "Fitt for the Manicorde" edited in 2003 by Christopher Hogwood. In 1659 one Antonius Sellosius appears in the lists of St. Omer English College as teacher of music, the

name being a Jesuit alias for Antonio Mason. Many of the 40 or so pieces contained in this manuscript are also present in Hogwood's manuscript and are also grouped conveniently by key. The repertoire covers a broad spectrum of the genres and influences of 17th-century Europe. The only named composer is John Bull, with his work, "The King's Hunt."

The majority of the works are dances, most of which also feature in MS1471; although only a few carry a specific title, Peter Leech has assigned titles to the others by style. Several have variations that are also in binary form, which raises the question of whether they are intended to stand as separate works or just to act as a varied repeats.

The volume opens with the monumental setting of *La Folia*, running to some 24 variations (four variations longer than the version in MS1471). Interestingly, in both sources the theme is written as mainly equal crotchets throughout, the only dotted note occurring in the penultimate bar, but in MS1471 each variation finishes with a major chord. There follows a Chaconne in 3/2 with a syncopated rhythm (found just as a bass in MS1471) identical to the Ciacona in Bernardo Storace's *Selva* of 1664. These two pieces sound very much like arrangements of guitar pieces.

Two other shorter Chaconnes are also included as no. 12 in C, which is structurally more varied than No. 25 in F. No. 4 is an imitative work showing kinship with the Spanish repertoire found in the Martin y Coll manuscripts, with the second part in triple-time. No. 20, a chordal piece, tentatively entitled *Toccata* by the editor, includes the direction *Vox Humana*, the only specific registration indicated. No. 21, "The Hunting Lesson", is good fun to play but of limited musical value! The Fugue No. 22, plausibly based on *Ira Missa est*, contains varied writing from homophony to a triple time section to slow minim chords. No. 23 is a brief Toccatilike piece that would be effective on a divided keyboard as would No. 24, a brief setting of the *Bergamasca*.

The set in D (No. 17) is prefixed by a most interesting attempt at an unmeasured prelude; this appears to have been unique in English sources until Keeble's organ pieces c.1777. The notation in its opening arpeggios shows a broad similarity to Lebègue's use of varied note values in his first book of pieces of 1677. Only one example of a Menuet is found, No. 10 in F, in flowing quavers. The nine Allemandes are broadly similar to those included in Locke's *Melothesia*; only No. 33 has a variation. Strangely, the second half of No. 32, the Allemande in C Minor, is shown as a separate piece, although comparison with MS1471 will dispel this idea.



Ornaments indicated include the double stroke, found in just three pieces and written across the note stems in "The King's Hunt", "The Hunting Lesson" and the Courante No. 27, where it may be interpreted as both trill and beat. A unique occurrence in No. 18 is the sign for an arpeggio, although obviously this is such a part of keyboard style that one wonders why it is found here. Of far greater interest is the very frequently occurring wavy line with a comma-like graphic joined to it which does not occur in any other English source. Very close to D'Anglebert's sign for a trill with turned ending, this interpretation is successful in many instances; interestingly, the facsimile page of *La Folia* shows the wavy line without the comma, although it is transcribed with it. The dances in particular would almost certainly have been heavily embellished as in contemporary French and English sources and a comparison with the pieces in MS1471 will provide help in this area.

Not elucidated by the editor are the curious ties; three notes of the same pitch occur with a tie connecting the first and third of notes. There are still a few transcription errors mainly of a note(s) misplaced by a third even in this second edition, but in the Allemandes Nos. 29-33b the player will have to decide on the application of accidentals in accordance with *musica ficta*; those pieces also in MS1471 provide a useful comparison for assisting with this problem. Terence Charlston has made a recording of all the pieces in the MS and will be offering further thoughts on this problematic area on his webpage, including his own readings of the MS.

Printed with four staves to the page, and generous spacing of notes, this volume is somewhat easier to read than MS1471, and includes a succinct introduction and several facsimile pages. Although this edition is not cheap, the outlay will be repaid many times by the pleasure derived from the contents, which provide a further selection of some fascinating and beautiful music that enriches our somewhat scanty knowledge of Restoration keyboard music in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Although some of the pieces demand a skilled hand, the dances offer a more recreational choice and particularly compliment those available in *Elizabeth Rogers' Virginal Book* 1656 and *Locke's Melothesia* of 1673.

*This review first appeared in British Clavichord Society Newsletter 45 (October 2009), and is included in abridged form here with thanks.*

In *Balli per Cembalo*, Christopher Hogwood presents no fewer than 89 short dances taken from three Italian manuscripts and one very much longer

pièce taken from a MS in the Royal College of Music Library. The first 41 pieces are taken from the earliest known source of Italian dance music now preserved in Venice; originally containing forty dances and two liturgical settings, *Veni Creator* and *Et exultavit spiritus meus*, one folio is missing with the loss of one complete and two partial dances. This is the first modern edition of the pieces in their original note values and also included is the illuminating information on proportional notation. Many of the dances are short, even with the repeats where indicated, and the majority consist of a melodic RH, occasionally lapsing into divisions, over chords of either a triadic composition or, far more frequently, of 1-5-8 in the LH. Included are the earliest settings of the *passamezzo antico*, two *salterelli* (barred a cut time but with a definite triple-time lilt) and a *paduana*. These pieces make excellent companions to the *Intabolutura Nova de Balli* of 1551, both of these collections predating the extensive collection of dances at Castell'Arquato, which shows far more fluid RH divisions.

Two manuscripts from collections in Florence provide a further 24 dances and arias each. Dated ca 1600-20 they contain further examples of the *passamezzo* bass as well as settings of the popular *Romanesca*, *Ruggiero* and *Spagnoletta* along with *gagliardas* (one of which is in C time, also found in the Ercole Pasquini and much later Spanish examples), *pavanas* and a very early *corrente*. There are also several aria settings ranging from the purely chordal to an elaborated RH melody over chords. Some of the *passamezzo* settings may well have been intended to be played consecutively, like those in the 1551 print. In the 60-80 years between these sets there is little evidence of increasingly sophisticated stylisation found in the contemporary prints of Trabaci, Mayone and Frescobaldi and the manuscripts of Ercole Pasquini and the Neapolitans, but a few of these charming pieces show some felicitous touches such as the single-note walking bass in the first half of No. 69, then transferred in thirds to the treble, and increased RH divisions in some of the others. It is interesting and instructive to compare different settings of the same aria or bass formula. The pieces in these three collections have no respect for academic rules of composition regarding consecutives and application of accidentals; Christopher Hogwood has indicated suggestions for the latter but the player is free to choose.

The final piece is a substantial set of variations on the *passamezzo antico* by Marco Facoli, a copy of whose second book of dances from 1588 has survived, but not the first from c.1586. Divided into 12 sections plus the *represe*, the LH frequently employs the triads, and octave plus fifth

of the earlier dances (a formula used with much enthusiasm by the later Picchi) but the RH divisions become increasingly virtuosic and the written out ornaments will pose a stiff technical test to even accomplished players. This piece is indeed a far remove from the earliest version in the Venetian MS.

Apart from the Facoli piece these dances pose no great technical difficulty, although care must be taken with some of the chordal leaps in the LH, and will give much pleasure on playing through; they are equally suited to harpsichord (preferably of a Mediterranean type), clavichord or even a chamber organ. Because they are so short there is plenty of scope for repeats with the player adding further ornaments and divisions. There is a comprehensive critical commentary containing an invaluable concordance of these dances with lute sources in particular. The editing is exemplary and the printing very clear. Several pages of facsimiles are worth studying, although the number of the *Terza Rima* in this modern edition is incorrect.

**Composer: Agostino Tinazzoli.**

**Title: Sonate e Capricci per Cembalo (2 Volumes)**

**Editor: Jörg Jacobi**

**Publisher: Bremen, Edition Baroque**

**eba4020 and eba4026**

**www.edition-baroque.de**

**Reviewed by John Collins**

Tinazzoli is another shadowy figure of the Italian Baroque of whom very little is known. Born c.1660 in Bologna, he became organist in Ferrara in 1690 and then moved to Rome. He spent some time in prison, being set free after writing a cantata in chalk on the walls(!), dying around 1723, thus being an almost exact contemporary of Alessandro Scarlatti.

MS 4166 in Münster contains 18 Sonatas, Capricci, Toccatas, in addition to a Passagallo. A longer version of the Toccata no. 17 is to be found in a MS in the Civico Museo Bibliografico, Bologna. These pieces, all the keyboard music that is known by him, are presented here in two volumes edited by Jörg Jacobi in an exemplary new publication from Edition Baroque, Bremen. Despite the variety in titles there is little difference stylistically between Sonata, Capriccio or Toccata. Of the eight Sonatas, four are headed "Per Organo". No. 5 for the "Offertorio", is a movement in A registered with Principali and Flauti which contains plenty of demisemiquaver arpeggios warning against too fast an opening tempo; no. 11, another *Offertorio* in A Minor, is lightly fugal and incisively rhythmic in 3/4; no. 12, an *Elevazione* with some lovely agonizing chromaticisms and no. 13, "Post Agnus", another concerto like movement with

an opening phrase in octaves that appears like a ritornello. Despite being specifically intended for use in the Liturgy, they are all are playable on stringed keyboard instruments with relatively little being lost.

Of the four sonatas headed "Per Cembalo" nos. 1 and 4 are multi-movement works; Sonata no. 1 is in six movements: a typically Corellian *Adagio*, *Allegro* and *Largo* being followed by a *Prestissimo Arpeggiato*, which refers here to the RH minim and crotchet chords, an *Adagio* in minims and a closing *Allegro* that alternates passages in thirds in the treble with dotted minim chords over a crotchet bass, this section being marked *Arpeggio*. Sonata 4 is a particularly successful piece in B Minor: a *Ritornello Allegro* is followed by a *Sarabanda* in the relative major, the work concluding with a binary form *Gigue*. The remaining Sonatas, nos. 2 and 8 are both satisfying through-composed *Allegros*.

Seven pieces are entitled *Capriccio*, of which nos. 7, 9 and 10 are headed "Per Cembalo", the remaining four bearing no instrumental preference. Nos. 7 and 10 are relatively short binary movement *allegros*, no. 10 carrying piano and forte indications, whilst no.9 is a through-composed *Allegro* with much interplay between major and minor; basically indistinguishable from many other early 18th-century Italian Sonatas, they are nevertheless entertaining to play. Nos. 3 and 14 are further multi-movement pieces – in no. 3 the *Presto*, another *Ritornello* movement with a vigorous dotted rhythm opening figure in octaves, is followed by a movement of 15 bars of semibreve chords marked *Arpeggio* concluded by a demisemiquaver cadenza before a Minuet. No.14 opens with oscillating semiquaver octaves in the LH with the RH quavers being two octaves above the bass, then a two bar *Adagio* leads to a *Gigue* marked *Allegro*. No. 15, a through-composed *Allegro* in 2 parts throughout, is a complete contrast; the LH throughout being repeated crotchets beneath a RH of mainly minim and crotchets. No. 16 is a short binary-form movement.

There are three pieces headed *Toccata*: no. 6 in G in 3/8 with its bounding quaver and semiquaver octaves in the LH and sudden changes of texture and tessitura is close to a Domenico Scarlatti sonata; no. 17 in D Minor is a splendid through-composed concertolike work with four extra movements in the Bologna MS including a Grave marked *Arpeggio*, a very short *Gigue*-like *Prestissimo*, a 4 bar *Adagio* of repeated diminished seventh quaver chords coming to rest on a tonic major and finishing with an *Aria*-like *Affetuoso* in G Minor which closes with a Phrygian cadence to D; the third *Toccata*, no. 18, is a *Presto* – *Allegro* binary form piece in two parts in 6/8 in D



Minor with further semiquaver broken octaves making demands on the player, followed by its Balletto.

Interestingly varied though the majority of these pieces are, perhaps the most outstanding is the set of *Partite sopra il Passagallo per Cembalo*, a set of 50 variations on the descending tetrachord D-C-Bb-A. In 3/2, this piece exhibits Tinazzoli's compositional skills in the variety of its writing with subtle differentiations from one variation to the next. For instance, the highly chromatic figures occurring in no. 16 in the RH are transferred to the LH in no. 17, and in nos. 19-23, where the LH consists of repeated crotchets, there are differences in the exact make-up of their melodic shape and the figures above them are also varied.

Nos. 43 and 44 contain lengthy internal trills but the final variation has a most unexpected RH as the piece sinks to a close. Not perhaps as extravagant as Gregorio Strozzi or as full of the unexpected as Frescobaldi, this piece in particular is worthy of being included in concerts.

A further interesting feature of these pieces is the very frequent appearance of figures beneath the LH, which in most instances advise the player on the harmonies required to fill in the texture: only occasionally do they perhaps point out a sudden change of harmony implicit in the predominantly two-part writing which may not require LH additions. Also, despite the limited range of keys used, there is in some pieces far-ranging modulation, for example in Capriccio 9, in bars 31-36, from Ab to E Major!

The informative preface is in German only, as is the short critical report but this should not deter prospective purchasers. These pieces, most of which are not exceptionally difficult (although there are some leaps and rapid passages in octaves, hand crossing is absent) are clearly printed and well-edited and although a few may be regarded as run of the mill, careful playing through will reveal more than enough exciting moments, particularly in the Vivaldi-Ritonelli movements, to fully justify adding them to one's library and repertoire.

**Title: Johann Schobert. *Concerto pour le Clavecin op. 15, no 4 en ut Majeur***

**Publisher: Editions du Centre du Musique Baroque de Versailles, 2009. Cah. 179**

**Title: Henri-Joseph Rigel. *Duo pour piano-forte et clavecin, op. 14 (no. 1-3)***

**Publisher: Editions du Centre du Musique Baroque de Versailles. Cah. 191**

**Reviewed by Micaela Schmitz**

Schobert (1735?-1767) and Rigel (1741-99) are both of that transitional era straddling harpsichord/fortepiano and Baroque/Classical: Schobert from Silesia (which includes part of present day Germany and the Czech Republic), Rigel from southern Germany at a time when both areas were probably culturally quite similar. They both served in courts before making their way to Paris, Schobert in 1760, and Rigel in 1767. The two would probably not have had much contact, since Schobert died in 1767 but doubtless similar influences were at work upon both of them.

Schobert did much for the repertoire of the late harpsichord –with sonatas accompanied by violin, clavecin trios and clavecin quartets. These works have a pre-classical feel to them, and were much admired by Mozart when he was in Paris. This concerto shows a typical Italian form where soloist and symphony alternate. The harpsichord plays continuo during the symphonic sections, which feature two horns with string orchestra.

The work is delightful and a nice addition to the harpsichord repertoire. It ranges from GG up to e<sup>3</sup>. The *Adagio* has an arioso feel with triplets over constant quaver accompaniment. In the final *Allegro*, there are sections where the left hand has an arpeggio marking. The ornamentation, including *pincé* and arpeggio markings, gives one the sense that it is definitely intended for harpsichord. In addition, the quite active figuration throughout the solo passages shows an awareness of the need to spin out the sound to fill the aural space. Though it is issued as a full score, I think a keyboardist would be able to perform from this score (and would need to for the continuo sections); the parts for the orchestra are available for hire.

Rigel worked in a broader array of genres, including string quartets, concerti, *opera-comique*, and French oratorio, termed "*hiérodrame*". He was known for combining Italian French and German styles and was influenced by Jommelli, Richter, and later Gluck. He taught at a royal school for singing and later the Paris Conservatoire. The three duos from Op. 14 are presented each in separate volumes with piano-forte in the top stave and clavecin in the bottom stave. The two instruments takes turns, at times serving a continuo role with many repeated notes, then a Classical accompaniment with Ablerti bass, then soloistic figuration, and at times a vocally inspired texture where longer note values and some held over suspensions are to be found.

The first duo, with four movements is the longest, although it may appear long because it repeats a Menuet after its Trio section, which helpfully prevents the need to turn back. There are few distinct



differences in figuration to differentiate the two instruments though it appears more fortepianistic: wedge-shaped articulation marks are found in both parts and there are slurs for groups of notes that "look" more fortepianistic. The range goes down to low FF. In one of the minuets, the accompaniment of parallel thirds is found in the harpsichord part, where it perhaps might have been easier and more characteristic in the fortepiano part. Dynamic markings, though more plentiful in the fortepiano part, are not restricted to just that instrument. In any case there is little beyond terraced dynamics.

The second duo has three movements and ranges from low GG to e3. This opens with some textbook two-note slurs in the fortepiano part. The accompaniment in the harpsichord again looks a bit more fortepianistic with gentle parallel thirds under a slur. In the opening *Allegro* there are some flourishes that are also typically fortepiano music with two grace notes to further arpeggiate a broken chord. The *Adagio* has parallel sixths which really sound their best on the fortepiano.

The third duo has four movements, one of which is a Polonaise with a *minore* section. The presence of a polonaise is probably more an indication of the French vogue for the Polonaise than of the origin of its composer. It includes some *unisono* writing, and together with its opening March gives quite a public (and more clavecin-like) feel; however the Menuet whose second part has accompanying chords on beats 2 and 3, cries out for fortepiano.

The obvious question then is what instrument(s) ought one to use. It seems clear –and if Rigel were sitting across from me I'd tell him so –that this is fortepiano music firstly but it will work on harpsichords. I imagine choosing either two fortepianos or two harpsichords would be easier from a practical tuning point of view –unless you happen to maintain a fortepiano at A415 or a harpsichord at A430! The layout is clear, and most page turns actually work. So these duos are easily performable –as long as you have two copies of each.

Along with Eckhart and Wagenseil, these two composers were important in that late transitional period, and they broaden our repertoire well. The music is engaging. Editions du Centre du Musique Baroque de Versailles have done us a service by making these editions available to us.

**Title: "George Frideric Handel: Harpsichord Suites (1720); Chaconne in G"**

**Performer: Jory Vinikour, harpsichord**

**Label: Delos, DE 3394**

**Reviewed by James McCarty**

The American harpsichordist Jory Vinikour has been of interest to this writer since his participation in the harpsichord competition at Spivey Hall in Morrow, GA in 1991. Vinikour and numerous other contestants in that memorable event have gone on to successful performing and recording careers that have brightened the early keyboard scene considerably. Vinikour, who studied with Huguette Dreyfus and Kenneth Gilbert, then claimed first prizes in the International Harpsichord Competitions of Warsaw (1993) and the Prague Spring Festival (1994). The current recording has generated an unusual amount of attention for a solo harpsichord recording, reviews having appeared in at least three other classical music periodicals.

Vinikour has a history of choosing harpsichords of very high quality and musical interest for his recordings, and the present one is no exception: John Phillips's 2001 instrument based on the 1739 Johann Heinrich Gräbner at the Kunstgewerbemuseum, Dresden. The unusual DD-d<sup>3</sup> compass of the original is preserved (Phillips speculates that such large instruments were intended for use in the church or the opera). The construction is Italianate, even including a false inner-outer appearance. The typical Saxon clarity both of tone and articulation, combined with the powerful bass register, result in a harpsichord highly appropriate and satisfying for the performance of Handel's suites.

Handel, like many composers of the time, was an inveterate borrower, and even those whose knowledge of these suites extends only to the 'Harmonious Blacksmith' air and variations will smile with recognition when hearing familiar melodies from the organ concertos, the orchestral suites, and the chamber works. Handel was a brilliant tunesmith whose instrumental works tend to the joyous, seldom to the profound. Vinikour takes obvious delight in playing this sort of music, particularly relishing the faster movements. His energetic playing always is precise, however, and the tonal character of the harpsichord allows him to adopt quite rapid tempi without loss of clarity. The live acoustic of the venue would almost certainly overwhelm a less articulate instrument, especially considering the more distant microphones that Delos's engineers have chosen for their recording. The result is much more like what one would hear as an audience

member at an actual concert, as compared to the much closer perspective of most recordings.

Vinikour's performance stands as a most worthy successor to the classic recordings of Colin Tilney (DG Archiv) and Scott Ross (Erato), both no longer available. On a personal note, it is gratifying and encouraging to see a harpsichord recording garner so much positive attention at a time when performances on the modern piano are replacing those on historic instruments in the catalogues of so many recording companies.

**Title: "Wired: Works for Harpsichord and Electronics"**

**Performer: Jane Chapman**

**Label: NMC Recording, NMC D145**

**Reviewed By Daniel Goren**

You may be forgiven for thinking that a collection of new works for harpsichord and electronics may not be an appetising prospect and indeed there is little on this disc to ease you into uncharted territory. However, if you're feeling just a little bit adventurous there's much to discover on here. Yes, many of the sounds you'll hear may be unfamiliar such as the rich and varied electronic soundscapes of Mike Vaughan's *In Memoriam...* (layer 6), Sohrab Uduman's *Breath across autumnal ground* or Paul Dibley's dramatic *INV I*. Others scarcely sound like there's a harpsichord involved at all. However what each of these tracks does is earnestly engage with what a harpsichord physically is – i.e. what it actually does.

The first thing to note is the excellent recording quality and unusual recording techniques. Paul Whitty's opening work, *seven pages*<sup>1</sup> part of an interpretation of Gyorgy Ligeti's seminal harpsichord work *Continuum*, makes explicit use of the sound of the harpsichord's mechanism by removing the sound of the plucked strings to great sonic effect. [Ed.: Please note *seven pages*<sup>1</sup> is the title of this work- not an endnote reference!]

The sheer physicality of the instrument is also very much evident in the two works by Paul Newland. Titled simply 1-2 and 3-4 they explore the instrument in unusual ways such as plucking strings with fingers, percussive sounds from knocking the instrument's body and sustained tones created by EBows (electronic bows). The use of close recording in these works has the effect of bringing you closer to the instrument and the space in which they are performed - truly chamber music for this contemporary world of electronics and digital media. The collection of works presented is undoubtedly

eclectic. James Dillon's pithy whirling *Birl* is packed with his trademark organic ebb and flow while Sam Hayden's *Scintilla* seems at times to make nods towards the instrument's baroque heritage despite having been developed from samples of found noises. Of course the harpsichord sound comes with such strong historical and cultural baggage that it's sometimes hard not to hear echoes, intentional or not of the instrument's heyday. This is occasionally true of Roger Redgate's blossoming and finely wrought *Residua*, a work packed with intriguing poetics which lingers long in the mind.

The biggest star of this disc however is Jane Chapman. Undaunted by the range and difficulty of demands placed upon her, Chapman seems to get straight to the heart of each of these diverse works, forming a conduit for each composer's designs on the instrument. A champion for a broad range of new music, her wealth of experience shines through. It takes not only confidence, but generosity to work on what must have been at times a highly collaborative venture.

No, this is no ordinary harpsichord recital disc - you won't be whistling any tunes from it tomorrow. But if you want a contemporary glimpse of what the world sounds like through the voice of the harpsichord coupled with some of today's most inquisitive composers, you should find in this collection of short works an engaging and provocative array of invitations.

