

# Harpsichord & fortepiano

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Musical Instrument Research Catalog  
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# REVIEWS

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## RECORDINGS

**CD Title:** Georg Philipp Telemann, *Oeuvres pour clavier (Overture, Concerto, Fantaisies, Chorales)*

**Performer:** Olivier Baumont

**Reviewed by** Charlene Brendler

Olivier Baumont's CD of Telemann is beautifully played and brilliantly recorded. Three composers—J.S. Bach, G.P. Telemann, and G.F. Handel—are performed on five instruments from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: two French harpsichords, two Italian harpsichords, and a fretted clavichord. This largess brings richness and variety to the listener's ears as well as contrasts from different sound ideals. The works of Telemann, Handel, and Bach are appealingly presented, ranging from the flashy opening French Overture to the concluding benediction-like chorales.

With the differing instrumental colours to their full potential, one hears the premier recording of Telemann's G Major Overture on a resonantly rich Goermans French double of 1774; Six Fantasias on dry and clear sounding anonymous Italian harpsichords of both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and a more Flemish, nasal sounding anonymous 17<sup>th</sup>-century French harpsichord. The chorales are played on an 18<sup>th</sup>-century anonymous fretted clavichord.

A humorous New Yorker magazine cartoon suggests the mixed reception Telemann has received these 250+ years. The cartoon illustrates a sign outside Lincoln Center advertising "All the Telemann You Can Stand." With over 3,000 works of uneven quality, Telemann's music offers a range from interesting and serviceable to first rate. This recording treats one to the previously unheard French Overture in G. This opening to the CD is delivered with refreshingly crisp rhythmic dotting, without being dry or pedantic, and, a forward motion propels both lines and phrases that are delivered with clarity and panache. The lavish sound adds to the fluidly executed ornaments, and florid cascades of passagework are stunningly played. Baumont chooses to feature the Goermans' lovely *peau de buffle* stop in the Aria, offering a welcome change in sonority to the richness of the opening movements. Here there are musical moments from Telemann that echo those in Bach's style.

The following track offers the G Major Concerto. Although Bach felt Telemann's piece worthy of transcription, the work is not nearly as interesting as the French Overture. The Concerto is stylistically more of

what we expect of Telemann with its typical clichés and cadence formulas.

Baumont skillfully pairs six Fantasias, grouped in parallel major and minor keys, and places them in the stylistic sequence of Italian, French, Italian. The contrast in style is heightened by the appropriate choice of instruments. Especially interesting is the gut-strung Italian 17<sup>th</sup>- century harpsichord. This sonority, so popular in the late baroque, is rarely heard live today. There are obvious tuning problems with a gut-strung harpsichord, and most players find it too impractical, making this particular Fantasia group especially welcome to hear.

Thirty more Fantasias for keyboard exist beyond the six heard here, as well as many for gamba and flute. They are all useful works for the intermediate student, as teachers of these instruments know. The keyboard fantasias offer short studies in style, technique, and improvisation. Telemann championed the French style, not always the easiest for the modern student, and those works in French style offer a convenient way to become more conversant with such idiomatic writing.

Besides the above-mentioned merits, another special feature of this CD is hearing instruments from private collections that are being recorded for the first time. The CD cover is well designed to reflect 18<sup>th</sup>-century sensibilities, and the performer's intention to present a bouquet of composers and instruments is mirrored by the luxuriously, botanically illustrated booklet. The colourful and informative liner notes do not read easily in English, but there are welcome bits of information to be gleaned from them. This disc would be a special addition to any baroque music lover's collection and I recommend it highly for its many merits.

**CD Title:** The Harmonious Thuringian: *Music from the early years of Bach and Handel*

**Performer:** Terence Charlston, harpsichord

**Recording Company:** Divine Art dda25122

**Reviewed by** John Collins

This CD offers a selection of 14 pieces from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, associated with the early years of Bach and Handel – some of the pieces may well have been studied by these illustrious names in their formative years – as well as pieces which they themselves composed. Some of the composers will be familiar, others far less so, with nine different genres featured on the CD. The pieces, taken from sources compiled by members of Bach's

circle, primarily the Gerber, Walther, Andreas Bach and Möller manuscripts, or within the geographic area such as the Mylau manuscript, are played on a fascinating instrument, a reconstruction by David Evans of the surprisingly little-known single manual instrument now in the Bachhaus, Eisenach – an example of local instrument making that would probably have been known to both Bach and Handel and a most important resource with which to explore the native music of the time, possessing two 8-foot stops, pitch of A=440, and tuned according to either Temperament Ordinaire (Bavington) with, in some cases, lowered D#, A# C and F, or Hamburg temperament (Drake).

The opening piece, the *Toccata in E Minor* BWV914 by J.S. Bach, is played here with verve and panache. This is followed by the two-movement *Suite no. 8* by Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer, a popular piece found in several manuscripts as well as in Fischer's published collection "*Les pièces de clavecin*" of 1696 (renamed *Musicalisches Blumenbüschlein* in 1698). The opening Prelude is in three sections, a central section of massive chords marked "*Harpegiando*" framed by toccata-like movements, Terence Charlston rising ably to the formidable challenges with consummate digital dexterity, whilst the following chaconne is based on the descending major tetrachord; both movements may contain hints of numerical symbolism. Charlston offers some moments of neatly applied rhythmic inequality in this French style piece and captures the playfulness and wit of the major sections as well as the more introspective moments of the central section. The French style was also of great interest to the young Bach, and we hear next the *Prelude* to the first of two suites published by Louis Marchand in 1702; although it is carefully notated, Charlston offers a flexible yet not over-free performance.

Numerical symbolism may also have been behind the next piece, Johann Philipp Krieger's *Passacaglia in D Minor*, the longest and most complex played on this recording, starting slowly and working up to cascades of small-value notes in over 200 3/1 bars; its unfolding variations on the harmonic pattern flow almost effortlessly from Charlston's fingers in this exciting work. The fast repeated notes in the treble throughout one variation, runs in thirds and the two variations with very rapid passages in the bass are negotiated with careful phrasing, and the explosion of chords marked "*arpeggio*" in the penultimate statement bring the work to a most satisfying conclusion – what a pity that only three pieces by this supremely gifted composer seem to have survived.

The short *Fantasia in G Minor* BWV 917 by J.S. Bach "on two subjects" is followed by the variations on

"*In dich habe ich gehoffet Herr*" by the younger Johann Krieger (Handel is known to have used his published collections as teaching pieces in England), which are excellent examples of the strophic setting of a hymn playable with or without pedals. The melody is heard in the soprano in the outer variations and in the bass in the central variation. The following *Allemande in C Minor* by Christian Ritter, subtitled "*in descensum Caroli xi Regis Sveciae*", is an excellent example of a tombeau or memorial piece, here given an eloquently moving performance which captures the grief at the death of the composer's patron.

A *prelude and fugue in E-Flat* attributed to Johann Christoph Bach is given a robust performance with some very neat arpeggiation at the close of the free prelude. The chromatic fugue subject sounds very interesting in the chosen tuning. Two pieces from the Mylau Tablaturbuch are heard next, a short *fugue in C* attributed to Pachelbel on stylistic grounds is followed by a *Capriccio Cromatico* by Tarquinio Merula, an intense piece, the subject of which rises through a ninth by semitones; Charlston's performance communicates the tension and excitement of the piece.

A brief *prelude in A*, BWV 896 by J.S. Bach, with its insistently dotted upper part over equal quavers, is followed by a set of four variations on "*Nun komm der Heiden Heiland*" by Friedrich Zachow (Handel's teacher in Halle), the chorale being heard first in the treble; then with semiquaver figuration in the treble; next by chords in treble over figuration in bass; and finally in the bass. After a short prelude by Johann Kuhnau, Bach's predecessor at Leipzig, from Partie V from his 1689 publication "*Neue Clavierübung, erster Theil*", here played using the buff stop to charming effect, the final work on the recording is the well-known *Suite in E* by Handel, comprising a solidly Germanic prelude, an allemande, a courante, with the concluding Air known as the Harmonious Blacksmith and its increasingly brilliant variations here given an exciting performance of controlled virtuosity.

The booklet provides a comprehensive discussion of how the pieces for the CD were selected and an overview of the sources, the composers and the music, with useful footnotes on source locations, a discussion of German harpsichords of the Baroque period and of the original instrument, design and qualities of the modern reconstruction and the tunings used for specific tracks. There is also a biography of the performer and of the instrument maker.

The front cover features a greatly enlarged detail of a painting of a Dutch interior which is reproduced in full on the back cover. This CD is highly recommended, not only because of the interesting selection of pieces and the exceptionally high performance standard with

some tastefully added ornamentation and suitably varied articulation to add character to the pieces, but also because of the successful matching of the repertoire with the instrument. Terence Charlston is to be commended for his attention to historical detail in both his scrupulous research into performance practice and to his ongoing quest to play the music on instruments that are as close as possible to those which the composers themselves may have known.

**CD Title: J.S. Bach, Six Partitas**

**Performer: Rafael Puyana, harpsichord (H.A. Hass, 1740). Recorded "ca. 1985."**

**Recording Company: SanCtus Recordings 027-028-02 3 CDs (2 hr. 36' 54).**

**Reviewed by Richard Troeger**

In the beginning (almost) was Wanda Landowska who, as a principal force in resurrecting the 16' stop, touched off a multi-generational culture war among harpsichordists. As stated in the liner notes by producer Betina Maag Santos, this recording was felt by Puyana and others involved to be the "culmination of a visionary dream," in presenting Bach on the three-manual Hass of 1740: the same harpsichord that had inspired Landowska's concept in 1900.

This is a fascinating recording from several perspectives, although not perhaps the monumental legacy described in the liner notes. The late Rafael Antonio Lazaro Puyana Michelsen (1931-2013) was an interesting figure in the history of the harpsichord revival. Nurtured by Landowska, he was the last major exponent of her school of playing, and his widely circulated recordings from the 1960s (still available on CD re-issues) preserve examples of sometimes electrifying rhythmic vitality and uninhibited use of the Pleyel harpsichord. His first Soler album (c1967) stands out among these efforts. Unfortunately, in other repertoire his approach can be heavy and even stodgy (c.f. the Louis Couperin selections). When the Pleyel style became untenable, he shifted to historical instruments (of which he had a notable personal collection) and, sadly, a great deal of the rhythmic drive and control disappeared. In a Scarlatti documentary of 1985, he can be seen performing 19 sonatas on various antique harpsichords, in a sometimes laboured style, and still using the high-finger technique associated with his teacher -- a technique which is quite limiting of articulatory subtleties on the lighter, shallower actions of 18th-century harpsichords. I am happy to say that, among what I have heard of Puyana's later recordings, the present one seems by far the most successful.

When the 1740 Hass re-emerged from obscurity in the 1950s, both Puyana and his teacher regarded the

event as a vindication of their approach, particularly against the then-developing norm of a "general-purpose" three-choir French- or Flemish-style double. The presence of the 16' and the availability of diverse sonorities across the three keyboards could be seen as supporting what Landowska had developed. Indeed, she had encountered the instrument in a Parisian piano shop in 1900, and although it was sold shortly afterward and she never saw it again, it seems to have inspired the style that she developed with the seven-pedalled Pleyels that bore her name.

Almost surprisingly, Puyana's performance of the Partitas generally sticks to one or two colours throughout a given movement, the dances typically registered in an ABAB or ABBA pattern. After reading the liner notes concerning the "vindication," I had wondered if the variety available, once by pedalling and now by changing keyboards, would be demonstrated. (For instance, in the opening of the Allemande of the first Partita, the bell-like pedal B-flats in the bass sounded on solo 16' against an 8' for the upper line, as in Landowska's famous recording.) But no: the different colours of the instrument can be heard from movement to movement, but the basic approach is quite (self-consciously?) conservative. It is a surprise when Puyana indulges himself in lute (*nazard*) vs. solo 4' for the *Tempo di Minuetta* in Partita No. 5, and the effect is delightful, as indeed is his playing of that entire suite. But on the whole, the choices are in fact quite sober.

As readers will know, the Hass instruments were long looked at with caution (and sometimes, as Puyana's notes insist, with disdain) by modern players and makers, although recently they have been better accepted in the early-music mainstream. Puyana's notes (likely written in the 1980s) sound defensive on the subject. He recounts Frank Hubbard's hostility to the Hass instrument during an abortive restoration attempt, in terms so extreme that I sought a response from the Hubbard company; but apparently no notes on this encounter survive. A copy I possess of Hubbard's own data (taken 1957) from the Edinburgh Hass (1764) pronounces it to have the finest tone he had heard on an antique harpsichord; but by the time his book was published (1965), his comments on Hass (indeed, on the German instruments generally) had become rather negative.

Sentiment against the Hass school is still encountered, citing unnecessary complexity, muddy tone, etc. I have myself no brief for or against the 16', but having played and heard the Yale Hass, and owning a very successful Hass-based instrument disposed 3x8', 4' (Ron Haas 1985, after Hass 1723), I have to express a strong liking for the clearly ringing, rather choir-like 8' sounds, plainer and more direct than on

the often lush French instruments. (Listen, for example, to the rear 8' stop in the first Menuet of Partita No. 1, or the Allemande from No. 6, on Puyana's recording. The corresponding stop on the Yale Hass fills the room with a warm glow.) As to the 16': as employed here, the textures remain clear and impressively powerful. (I felt nonetheless that a good number of the movements in which it is heard, could do without it.)

Whether or not Bach normally used Saxon instruments and/or a 16' (advocates on both sides of these questions tend to raise their voices quickly), it is hard to believe that he would not have accepted at least the general validity of the lavish Hamburg instrument. In any case, if one is attempting to recreate historical aesthetics, dismissing hard evidence on personal preferences is scarcely reasonable. 16' instruments existed--in fact, more commonly in Germany than was long thought to be the case--and like them or not, they were used and accepted at the time, or they would not have been made. Puyana, firmly on one far side of the fence, goes so far as to say that "we can at least be certain that [Bach and Scarlatti] would not have relished the seductive sounds" of French harpsichords. (Notes, p.42.) Why it can be so difficult to accept that musicians then as now might not only tolerate, but accept and enjoy variety, remains perplexing. Did Scarlatti write a letter to Roseingrave, to explain that his sonatas could not be heard properly on British harpsichords? (Of course, prejudice *is* authentic. Look at some of Charles Burney's comments on continental harpsichords.) In the event, the Hass was restored (early 1980s) by Andrea Goble, who tells me that all the original parts were present, but the tuning pins loose. He quilled it in Delrin and restrung it in low-tensile iron and brass.

As to the playing itself: The performances are technically assured, straightforward, often beautifully poised, and project the player's obvious affection for this music. A few movements are treated with a certain approach to French-style inequality, which does not strike me as especially convincing here. I could wish that Puyana's early flair for imaginative arpeggiation had remained part of his equipment. A number of dull-thud resolutions could then have been avoided--for example, in the Sarabande of Partita No. 6. In that movement, too, a freer treatment of the swirling figuration would be more graceful, and probably more idiomatic, than the carefully literal rendering it receives here. At his best, Puyana had a tight, rhythmic drive to his playing, but Landowska could not impart her own instinct for flow and placement to someone with a quite different rhythmic sense. The rhythms here are occasionally rather wooden, with sometimes a sense of grammatical counting (and in a few spots, sudden jolts of tempo), rather than rhetorical expression that would merely take

such basics for granted. Puyana may have been one of those who mistake preoccupation with up-close, small-level rhythmic/metric issues for "authenticity."

Another minus is the limited variety of articulation, and many passages (fiery, dotted lines, for example) that one might treat in various ways are sometimes rendered with a simple, plain linkage (not overlegato). Detached notes v. a plain legato seem to be the main ingredients. Having said that much, I should add that, apart from the occasional rhythmic issue already mentioned, Puyana's is not a fussy or mannered approach. He often seems content to let the instrument do the work, and the playing is obviously the result of much thought and commitment. Tempi are never excessive in either direction. His performance more than vindicates the instrument as a vehicle for Bach, if the matter had been in question.

The recorded sound strikes me as very successful: clear and, although fairly close, never overblown, or creating an exaggerated sense of space. The voicing seems to have been refined for this series of recordings; the little snarls of some irregular voicing on the almost-contemporaneous Scarlatti set (also recorded on the Hass) seem to have been smoothed out, and the instrument sounds very fine indeed. Until the 1740 Hass is placed with another recording artist intimate with its mysteries, this set is an almost unique chance to hear it at its best on disc. (The sound on the 1984 Scarlatti set is not as well-recorded.)

It is a pity that the late Gustav Leonhardt did not leave a recording on this harpsichord. Touch and style affecting perceived tone as they do, it would be fascinating to compare his sound on such an instrument to Puyana's. There is too the misfortune of no recording ever having been made of Landowska playing joyfully on an instrument that was one of her original inspirations.

The discs are presented in a well-produced, lavishly illustrated booklet with the text given in three languages. In the notes, Puyana states that it was decided to pitch the instrument between 411 and 415. The notes to his 1984 Scarlatti album state incredibly that it is pitched at A=466. However, both albums, at least as played on my otherwise reliable CD player, come through as A=392. I salute the uncredited technician who maintained the instrument during the sessions (probably Patrick Yègre, who is thus credited for Puyana's 1984 Scarlatti set on Harmonia Mundi.) It may well have been a task as monumental as the harpsichord itself.

**CD Title: Bach, The Goldberg Variations**  
**Performer: Michael Tsalka**  
**Recording Company: Paladino Music PMR 0032**  
**Reviewed by Pamela Hickman**

Ever since Glen Gould's five recordings of J.S. Bach's "Goldberg Variations" on piano, his interpretations of them have been discussed endlessly. Then came Wanda Landowska's first performance on harpsichord in 1933. In the meantime, many, many more recordings have come onto the scene, played on all manner of historical and less historical keyboard instruments: on organ, guitar, harp, marimba, flute and piano, string trio, orchestra, etc. All these performances attest to the fact that fascination with this one hour of almost constant G Major music based on a much-used 32-note ground goes well beyond what the composer referred to on the title page as variations "composed for connoisseurs, for the refreshment of their spirits."

Having previously performed them on harpsichord, chamber organ, square piano, fortepiano and modern piano, Dr. Michael Tsalka has now recorded the Goldberg Variations BWV 988 on two clavichords, taking the listener into a very different sound world. In his liner notes, Dr. Tsalka explains how he chose to alternate between the two instruments, both made by Sebastian Niebler (Berlin) — a clavichord of a "lyrical timbre", based on a 1796 instrument by Johann Christoph Georg Schiedmayer (Boston Museum of Fine Arts) and a more "robust-sounding" instrument based on South German and Swedish models from the late eighteenth century, such as those made by Christian Gottlob Hubert, Jacob Specken and Schiedmayer. "Some listeners might wonder if I had a system of assigning specific variations to each instrument", the artist writes. "This was not the case; quite a few decisions were taken in the spur of the moment, an intuitive response to the technical and expressive requirements found in each variation".

So why play the Goldberg Variations on clavichord? One reason is probably that a work as personal as the Goldberg Variations would surely have been played within the confines of the Bach home, and the clavichord is indeed a house instrument of the time. Another reason would be that the clavichord is one of the most expressive, responsive and sensitive of keyboard instruments, offering variation of touch as well as the possibility to produce vibrato. So once a key is struck, the sound needs continuous nurturing, demanding much skill and listening on the part of the player. As to the instrument's soft voice, easily masked by the most minimal of background sounds or even by the player's breathing, research has shown that the clavichords on which Bach played were not as weak in volume as those made in the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century revival

era. But, most importantly, Johann Nikolaus Forkel, Bach's first biographer, wrote that the clavichord was Bach's favorite keyboard instrument, allowing him to "express his most refined thoughts".

Listening to this recording, one is embarking on a unique listening experience, one only to be compared with that of hearing the clavichord played at very close range. It presents an opportunity to tune into a timbre whose directness needs no cosmetic help in presenting Bach's wealth of ideas and use of several high baroque forms. In the opening galant-style Aria, Tsalka not only plays with spontaneity, he offers the singing quality of the aria as a message to the listener — that we are about to hear this instrument really "sing". We are then lured into the sound world of each variation, be it the embellished energy of Variation IV, the vivid harmonic colouring tugging at one's heart strings in the meditative Variation XIII, the uncompromising, confrontational power of tension in Variation XIV, Tsalka's acknowledging of Bach's quirky humor in Variation XIV or the probing, soul-searching process of (the minor) Variation XXV, its staggered voices and expressive dissonances played out by the artist with his own sense of wonder and discovery. I found myself not wanting to part from this movement.

From here, Tsalka launches into the sweeping intensity of the final variations, a mammoth web of Bach's most sophisticated, complex and dense counterpoint. Rather than place a musical joke after these compelling variations, Dr. Tsalka chooses a direct, fresh and noble reading of the Quodlibet (Variation XXX). And, prior to the return of the Aria, how relevant it is that the recording technicians did not delete the sound of the artist inhaling in preparation of the final gesture: here was the Aria that had inspired the work, played by the artist with understatement and humility.

This is a recording to interest, surprise and delight listeners. Michael Tsalka's performance of the Goldberg Variations on two clavichords is articulate and brilliant, allowing for projection of Bach's counterpoint and subtly shaped inner voices and bass lines, neither being lost in the complex textures. In playing that bristles with creativity and emotion, he makes fine use of both instruments' palette of colors.

Born in Tel Aviv, Israel, Michael Tsalka is a versatile artist. He plays solo and chamber music repertoire from early Baroque to contemporary repertoire, performing throughout Europe, the USA, Canada, Asia and Latin America. He is currently teaching keyboard performance at the Lilla Akademien in Stockholm and is visiting professor at the Celaya Conservatory in Guanajuato, Mexico.

**CD title: "Hours Well Spent"**

**Performer: Anna Maria McElwain, clavichord.**

**Recording Company: Robert Holmin Ljud & Bild,**

**RHLB 10**

**Reviewed by Richard Troeger**

"Helen [Hopekirk] first entertained us by playing experimentally some of the compositions of Debussy on the clavichord, among which the most effective was *Jardins sous la Pluie*." \*

The clavichord, with its colour and dynamic variation, often lures the player to try various works that are, to one degree or another, less than idiomatic to the instrument. Here is a programme of diverse music from the sixteenth century through modern times, much of it not written with the clavichord in mind: a Ricercar by Andrea Gabrieli; "A Galliards Gygge" by Byrd; Bach's Chromatic Fantasy & Fugue; Beethoven's "Pathétique" Sonata; variations on a theme of Haydn, by Fredrik Emanuel Uthander; four Preludes by Chopin; Saint-Säens' Suite pour le piano, op. 90; Webern's Variations, op. 27/1; and Lygeti's Capriccio No. 2. The clavichord used is an original 1808 Lindholm & Söderström, housed in the Nydahl Collection (Stiftelsen Musikkulturens Främjande, Stockholm). The CD notes mention that it is very well preserved, with mainly original strings and muting cloth (points included in its Boalch III entry). The instrument was tuned and tended for the recording by HansErik Svensson, the well-known expert on Swedish clavichords. The clavichord is pitched at A=415

As she writes in the programme notes to her CD, McElwain's "initial intention [when first studying the instrument] was to play Bach on the clavichord. Since then my horizons have greatly broadened. Music of earlier periods is played on the piano all the time. Why then should not more recent music be played on older instruments? I became fascinated with the idea of an exploration of the limits of the clavichord, approaching it with the music of Chopin."

Obviously, a fundamental difficulty with this approach is that there is very little Romantic piano repertoire that can be rendered without a sustaining pedal. (One also might question the approach of "reverse authenticity.") McElwain touches on this issue in a paper that she cites in her CD notes, her document (now online) that was a requirement of her degree at the Sibelius Academy: "...the Swedish clavichord models were designed in a way that the length of the string from the bridge to the wrest plank was longer than in German models, bringing a so called sympathetic sound to the sounding area of the string. This together with the rich overtone series colour[s] and prolong[s] the sound and [is] are a significant way of enrichening [sic] the sound, which

is a significant purpose of the pedal of the piano.

When the pedal is used on a piano, it allows the open strings to resonate with the ones which are played; in other words artificial overtone series are formed. The freeing of the hands to move to another part of the keyboard is actually a secondary purpose of the pedal. The richness in [the] overtone series on the clavichord together with the sympathetic sound of the Swedish models diminishes the necessity of a sustaining pedal in comparison to the sound of the piano, which is closer to pure tone and less rich in overtones than the clavichord." \*\* Of course, the sustaining pedal's function of freeing the hands to move widely is not altogether a secondary consideration, as McElwain herself acknowledges throughout her document.

I will give particular attention to the Chopin selections, as readers will be curious, and McElwain's document outlines her approach, which is fundamental to the other piano works presented here, as well. (There is not space for such discussion in the CD notes themselves; the disc is presented in a fold-out cardboard sleeve without separate booklet.) Two of her main criteria regarding the Chopin Preludes are whether a given clavichord has sufficient compass for the individual pieces, and how to make small rewrites to accommodate the situation when a note distant from its fellows cannot be managed as written. One small adjustment has to be made in Prelude No. 3. Otherwise, McElwain finds that some musical aspects have to be realised perhaps differently on the clavichord, versus the typically smoother renderings on the piano.

She writes on p. 18, "This is a Prelude which suits the clavichord beautifully. The left hand must be kept as light as possible. This is easier if some points of articulation are given emphasis in each measure, and logically that would be the first and third quarters and to emphasize these two further, a slightly less emphasis can be given to the sixteenth-notes which precede them." Regarding Prelude No. 4, she speaks of the need for keeping the hand close to the keys for smooth repetition of the repeated chords--those same chords which Hans von Bülow likened to Chopin's laboured breathing during a consumptive attack. She also mentions arpeggiating some of them for special emphasis. In fact, 19<sup>th</sup> - and early 20th-century pianists often arpeggiated chords for just that reason: a "freedom" now sadly lacking in modern practice.

Of the so-called "Raindrop" Prelude, also included, she writes, "This piece explores both the quiet and sweet side of the clavichord and the deep and powerful range in one piece and is an excellent exhibit of the possibilities of the clavichord. There are two difficulties in the piece [need for close finger attack; independence of the fingers], but they are a mere challenge and not

preventive of using the piece on the clavichord." If the reader is curious about more manic works such as Preludes 16 (B-Flat Minor) and 24 (D Minor), McElwain's conclusion is that these pieces cannot be managed on the clavichord because of their many leaps and broad-ranging figurations.

McElwain favours conservative tempi not always in accord with the sustaining power of the instrument. One could wish that she would "let herself go" more, but museum hours for recording are notoriously restrictive, and this disc would be a taxing assignment. I cannot say that I found the Beethoven performance fully convincing. Among other factors, the heavy bass of the Lindholm -Söderström, with perhaps varied staggering between 4' and 8' strings, is not grateful for closely-voiced chords, forcefully played. Here and in other pieces, the keys are sometimes released so quickly after an accentual attack that the rather complex sound of the instrument cannot fully declare itself.

The last tracks of the review copy of the CD would not play, but another copy, sent first but thought to be lost in the mail, arrived at length; its final tracks were intact. Rather unexpectedly, the works by Webern and St.-Sæns come off the most successfully. In other cases, even in movements that do not depend upon the sustaining pedal, the effect sometimes becomes rather dry, although it is interesting to hear the various selections played on such a fine and venerable instrument.

It is sad that clavichords do not fare well when recorded at any appreciable distance, for the timbre of a good instrument, although it may sound quite plain up close, can develop wonderful qualities when heard at, say, 20 feet. The Lindholm-Söderström heard here seems to be recorded quite closely, and while it is a clear rendering from that perspective (if overtaxed in a few *fortissimi*), both it and the player's inflections might have benefited from a slightly enlarged perspective.

\*(Mabel Dolmetsch, *Personal Recollections of Arnold Dolmetsch* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1958), 76.

\*\* Anna Maria McElwain, "The Clavichordist's View on the Chopin Preludes", (Dissertation, Kuopio, 2010), 7.

**Title:** *The Thistle and the Rose: Folk-inspired baroque music from Scotland and England.*  
**Performers:** Fleur (Laura Justice, recorders; Jennifer Bullock, violins; Bridget Cunningham, harpsichord)  
**Recording Company:** Rose Street Records, 2012  
**RSR 003**  
**Reviewed by** Jan-Piet Knijff

On this unusual CD, the British trio *Fleur* presents itself with an appealing programme. The "folk-inspired" in the subtitle should be interpreted somewhat broadly: if Farnaby's *Daphne* is "folk-inspired", then so is Bach's Cantata 140. But surely Jennifer Bullock is right that "[t]he boundary between folk and art music at the time was often blurred, as composers wove folk melodies into new works."

The two sonatas from James Oswald's *The Seasons* are an excellent example of this approach; the jolly second movement of *The Thistle* in particular is delightful. Another exciting item is "London's Loyalty & Rose is White and Rose is Red" from Playford's *English Dancing Master*. From Tobias Hume, that remarkable master of the viol, come "Touch me lightly" and "Tickle me quickly". And of course "Greensleeves" is there, in the famous version from *The Division Flute*.

The three musicians are all outstanding performers. Justice demonstrates a virtuoso command of the various recorders with a broad range of articulation, creative intonation, cute ornaments, and a playful approach to rhythm and rubato. Bullock is a truly wonderful viol player who brings Hume and a set of Playford pieces alive as if they were composed yesterday. But she can also let her viol sing with both natural and thoughtful phrasing in "Daphne". Cunningham demonstrates her abilities with Farnaby's equally demanding and attractive, almost Romantic "Daphne". In ensemble I could sometimes imagine her accompaniment to be a touch more active.

The group's arrangements sometimes features the recorder and viol in unison, an interesting effect despite – or maybe because of – the very different sound production of the two instruments. In addition, there is the occasional use of percussive effects, presumably using the harpsichord, something that seems to be gaining popularity lately. All in all a lovely and highly original *carte de visite* of a very fine trio.

**CD Title:** Koželuch: Complete Keyboard Sonatas  
**vol 2**  
**Performer:** Kemp English  
**Recording Company:** Grand Piano GP643  
**Reviewed by:** Bruce Reader

This release by Grand Piano is the second volume of a projected cycle of all 50 of Leopold Koželuch's keyboard sonatas (though my copy of Grove's lists 49 solo sonatas). These are billed as premiere recordings. Kemp English plays a fortepiano made by Thomas and Barbara Wolf after a 1795 fortepiano by Anton Walter.

The booklet notes by English appear to be general to the whole series, not giving specific information on the particular sonatas included on this disc. Therefore, I

**Harpsichord & fortepiano**

have been unable to ascertain the specific dates of the works performed here. Given that Koželuch's earliest sonata was composed in 1773 and his last three sometime after 1810, the instrument used is generally quite suitable.

Though no detailed information is given about the instrument, it is likely to have a compass of FF to g<sup>3</sup> with knee levers used to raise the dampers and a handstop to operate the moderator. Tuning is given as unequal at A = 430 Hz.

The first of the four sonatas on this disc is the Piano Sonata in A Major, Op.2 No.2, P.XII:12. The opening *Moderato* has some Mozartian touches and a tremendous forward flow with some lovely upward scales. The *Andante* opens with a rather doleful theme soon interrupted by incisive chords. *Occasionally the sound of the fortepiano changes, as Kemp English uses the moderator, creating muted qualities which, as would be expected, produces a somewhat muddled sound.* English reveals some fine sounds with rich, florid playing around really fine climaxes. The *Allegretto* brings a memorable tune that sticks in the memory.

The *Largo – Poco presto* that opens the two-movement Piano Sonata in C Minor, Op.2 No.3, P.XII:13 has a more serious mood with increasingly firm chords opened out between, before the rhythmically interesting *Poco presto* arrives. A bright and lively *Allegretto* follows, again with some attractive invention. Koželuch always seems to draw out unusual ideas from his material highlighted by English's careful use of the moderator.

The *Allegro moderato* of Piano Sonata in D Major, P.XII:14 moves ahead confidently with English drawing some extremely fine timbres from his instrument. The *Menuetto* is nicely pointed up by English's left hand as this terrific little movement proceeds. English uses the moderator a number of times adding interest. The concluding *Rondo allegro* brings another fine memorable tune.

Piano Sonata in F Major, op.5 opens with a rhythmically dancing *Allegro molto* with English drawing some gorgeous textures from the fortepiano. The *Andante con variazioni* presents a very fine set of theme and variations from which English draws so much from his instrument whether it be tone, textures or colours. English hurtles away in the *Rondeau: Presto* showing his brilliantly fluent technique in the fine conclusion to this sonata.

These sonatas are a real joy. Kemp English displays a really fine, fluent fortepiano technique bringing a sense of discovery and delight. The recording venue, though favouring upper frequencies, gives a sense of space around English's instrument. No one should hesitate to acquire this new disc in what looks set to be an exciting series.

**CD Title: Music for guitar and fortepiano from the XVIII and XIX century**

**Performers: *La Corde Vibrante* (Dario Macaluso, guitar; Kaoru Iwamura, fortepiano): Music for guitar and fortepiano from the XVIII and XIX century (Giordani, Beethoven-Carulli, Diabelli, von Weber).**

**Reviewed by Jan-Piet Knijff**

That libraries full of repertoire for guitar and piano have been practically forgotten for so long is largely explained by the development of the two instruments: The modern guitar is significantly louder than its early 19th-century counterpart, yet it can hardly keep up with the modern grand piano. Leaving aside the problem of balance, the difference in sound quality makes it almost impossible to bring the instruments together today.

"It sounded like three string instruments", a friend aptly commented after hearing a recording of Beethoven's "Archduke" on period instruments. Much the same is true for the combination featured on this CD. As with the piano trio, all problems miraculously disappear when period instruments are used. Ms. Iwamura is lucky enough to play two very fine historic instruments from the Sweelinck Collection, one by Michael Weiss (Prague c 1805), another by Joseph Böhm (Vienna c. 1820); Mr. Macaluso plays a guitar made in London as late as 1859. Especially with the Weiss piano, it is often strikingly difficult to identify which notes are played by either instrument. It makes the combination incredibly appealing.

The popularity of both instruments at the time means that there are literally heaps of music, much inevitably not of the greatest artistic merit. The best original work here is probably Weber's *Divertimento* op. 38. But the best composition hands-down is Beethoven's Mozart variations ("Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen"), here presented as "Variations de Beethoven", arranged by the prolific Paris-based guitarist Carulli. That Carulli edited the music of Beethoven more than strictly necessary is something he surely has had to answer for a long time ago; today, many will look at this as an Interesting Case of Contemporary Reception rather than Gross Misunderstanding of Genius.

The two performers are clearly excellent musicians who get along well. The one minor blemish is occasional tuning problems in the high range of the piano. Given that the CD was recorded in one day, using two historic instruments outside their "homes", this little problem is more than understandable and easily forgiven.

## SCORES

**Title: Catena sammlung (Mus. Ms. Landsberg 122**

**- Berlin), volume I**

**Editor: Jolando Scarpa**

**Publisher: Edition Walhall EW919**

**Reviewed by John Collins**

This is the first of two volumes offering the previously unpublished pieces contained in MS Landsberg 122, Berlin which was compiled by Giovanni Battista Catena around the middle of the seventeenth century. The manuscript offers an overview of the different compositional genres encountered in Rome at this time, with the majority being, as one would expect, Versetti for use in the Liturgy. The contents of this modern edition under review include two pieces ascribed to Frescobaldi, both Elevazione, in a style very different from the floridly embellished Toccatas included in his second book of Toccatas, consisting of slow chordally based *durezze e ligature* in the style of Ercole Pasquini's few surviving examples. The first piece contains some passages with the treble minims ascending by semitones, and from bar 29 the bass quickens to quaver movement before semiquaver passaggi enliven the final three bars. The second piece moves almost entirely in minims, again with progressions by semitone, this time in all parts.

These are followed by two pieces attributed to Orazio Tarditi (1602-77), who was a member of the Roman school; a further Elevazione which is also in the earlier chordal style, but with several bars of crotchetts against semibreves; a Toccata which consists primarily of semiquaver figuration against semibreves or minims, which leads to a Fuga, a loosely imitative few bars which soon lapses into toccata-like writing. This work with its sequential figures based on short motifs bears close resemblance to Bernardo Pasquini's toccatas and also to Frescobaldi's manuscript Toccatas, far removed from his published examples.

The rest of the contents of this first volume is anonymous and in addition to two incomplete pieces on p.30-32 (one piece, toccata-like, without heading on p.30 is a short 20 bar piece), comprises many others. These include a Fantasia; a 35-bar mainly imitative work on the sixth Tone; eight Canzonas (one of which is incomplete); a Toccata similar to Tarditi's; a Ricercar which opens in a canzona rhythm which is then presented in diminution followed by a triple time section which leads into a 3-bar toccata-like coda; a set of four *Versetti sull' Inno Veni Creator* (the first of which is a very short toccata, the second is chordal and the other two are imitative); a short *Toccata per la Gloria in Excelsis*; and *sette* [seven] *Versetti per il Sanctus*. The first six are

imitative. The final one is marked *Adagio col Tremolo*, a very rare indication, followed by a concluding chordal Amen.

After this, there are two individual Versetti on the sixth Tone and some nine sets of Versetti on various Tones, ranging from three to six in the set. Those headed *del VII Tono* are actually in C, not in D, so perhaps the editorial title is incorrect. Most of the Versetti are imitative and rarely exceed ten breve bars (the numeration includes some semibreve bars as well), although the fourth and fifth Versetti on the first Tone run to over 30 bars. Most subjects are in longer note values, but a few move in quavers and exhibit a livelier sense of movement.

The Canzonas (all but two presumably untitled in manuscript as the title in the volume is in brackets) are in the main fairly short one-section pieces with various opening rhythms. The one on p.36 opens with a five note ornamental figure similar to Santa Maria's *Redoble*; the concluding triple time section works new material. The work which follows in this volume is a rare example of a piece in D with two sharps – an earlier example is by Bertoldo. The Canzona on p.45 concludes with a triple-time section, the subject of which is loosely derived from the opening material, before a concluding coda.

The preface concentrates on the comments made by Bartolomeo Grassi in the *Partitura del primo Libro dello Canzoni* of 1628 about Frescobaldi having many manuscripts of pieces ready for publication. Many pieces remained in manuscript and are now in various libraries in Europe, the authenticity of these being a subject still causing much disagreement amongst eminent scholars of the Italian 17<sup>th</sup>-century keyboard repertoire. The printing is clear in a generously sized font, with six systems to the page. There is no critical commentary as such, editorial corrections being marked in the score, although several missing accidentals will need to be marked, and there are a few passages still remaining which are open to conjecture, and, in one or two cases seem to be quite incorrect – an example is the left hand of the “Canzona” in bars 5 and 11 commencing on p.33. Some Versetti finish with a chord containing the fifth but no third; given that the majority conclude with either a full chord or a bare octave, today's player may well be entitled to some licence in such matters. The first system of the left hand of the Canzona in D on p.39 is in the bass clef, necessitating multiple leger lines as the notes ascend to treble D; surely a treble clef would have made reading far easier. The distribution of the notes between the hands in the original tablature has been maintained, although this does not offer clarity in voice leading.

The volume is a welcome addition in modern

notation to the relatively scarce material from the post-Frescobaldi period in Rome in particular and Italy in general; none of the pieces has an obbligato pedal part, and although many are liturgically based and are still suitable for such use today, they also offer recreation, and good teaching material on the harpsichord or clavichord as an introduction to the far more demanding pieces by Frescobaldi himself. I await volume two with anticipation.

**Work title:** Gerolamo Frescobaldi, *Organ and Keyboard works III: Il Secondo Libro di Toccata... di cimbalo et organo.*  
**Editor:** Christopher Stembridge with the collaboration of Kenneth Gilbert  
**Publisher:** Bärenreiter BA8414  
**Reviewed by** John Collins

Published in 1627, the *Secondo Libro* contains 11 toccatas, of which no. 3 and 4 are elevation toccatas and are clearly intended for organ, no. 5 and 6 have long pedal notes but which, according to the title, can be played without them, in which form they were included in the Turin tablatures. No. 8, entitled *di durezze, e Ligature*, is a fine example of this genre. The toccatas continue the nervous discontinuity shown in the first book, and great technical challenges of both digital dexterity and rhythmic complexity are posed in no. 9 (Stembridge's suggested solution to the latter challenge is certainly workable – as he writes, there are others), at the end of which the composer writes "Non senza fatiga si giunge al fine" – still very true today. In place of the expected twelfth toccata as appeared in the first book of toccatas etc, there is a setting of Arcadelt's "*Ancidetemi pur*" - somewhat restrained in comparison with similar settings by Mayone and Trabaci (the original vocal text is included as an appendix).

There follow six canzone, which are somewhat freer in approach than the examples published in 1615 with the ricercare, four hymns (*Della Domenica*, *Dell'Apostoli* with three verses and *Iste confessor* and *Ave Maris Stella* with four), and three *Magnificats* (on the first, second and sixth tones) each with five verses, *Aria detta Balletto* with eight parts, five gagliardas, *Aria detta la Frescobalda* with five parts, including a gagliarda and a concluding corrente, probably the first example of a composer publishing variations on a tune which he himself had composed, six corrente including one which is a broken chord version of the preceding dance, and to conclude the (15) *Partite sopra Ciaccona* and the (32) *Partite sopra Passacagli*, which are the earliest published keyboard examples of these two genres.

Great care has been taken to preserve the original beaming and alignments. The short introduction gives

a brief biographical outline of Frescobaldi's life at the time of this volume's publication, a commentary on the music and notation employed and on instruments and tuning – it is noteworthy that the note A-Flat makes its first appearance in this volume, indeed, in Toccatas IX and XI it appears alongside G#, suggesting that an instrument with split keys would be the best option for performance. On the contrary, D# appears only once, and then at a cadence.

Frescobaldi's preface is included as the first page of the main text. There is a list of sources, and editions and reprints of the volume including their location, and an extensive critical commentary, which every player should read thoroughly; particularly interesting are the many variants found in the Turin tablatures, which contain the bulk of the contents of this volume, including added ties and varied application of accidentals. The editorial policy is as in the previously published volumes of the ricercars and the *Primo Libro de Toccate*. Small print accidentals indicate that the editor considers that the note should be flattened or sharpened according to *musica ficta*, and an "x" indicates those notes where the editor feels that the performer must decide for him or herself whether to add an accidental (there are, of course, other places which may admit such inflections) and an asterisk indicates probable errors in the original, amply discussed in the critical commentary. There are several pages of facsimiles which are also well worth studying.

Two appendices list firstly those engraving errors and corrections made before the first edition of 1627 and later ones from the second edition of 1637, followed by an exhaustive list of handwritten or engraved corrections found in copies of the first edition; the second appendix lists errors that remained uncorrected, many of which are obvious errors still present in the original which have been corrected for this modern edition – Stembridge refers the player to the critical commentary for further information. This careful scrutiny should act as a prompt to today's player to be ever critical of the source, however beautifully it may be engraved.

It is a pity that many of the problems of performance such as ornamentation and the suggestions for playing the carefully notated trills are discussed only in the preface to volume I part 1, where they are dealt with comprehensively; we must hope that players will have bought this already, since this should be compulsory reading, especially for the newcomer to these pieces, prior to playing the music. The quality of printing is excellent, and the very careful layout ensures that page turns are manageable by the player. Christopher Stembridge is to be congratulated for his sterling work in making this seminal publication available in an accurate modern edition and we should be deeply grateful to him and his team for the work that has gone into the

comprehensive critical commentaries and appendices, and also to Bärenreiter for having the vision to embrace and carry out this project.

**Work: Franz Xaver Mozart, Complete Piano Works, Volume II**  
**Editor: Karsten Nottelmann, Fingering: Rolf Koenen**  
**Publisher: Henle Verlag, 2011 HN595**  
**Reviewed by Bruce Reader**

Born just five months before his father's death, Franz Xaver Wolfgang Mozart (1791-1844), was the youngest child of six born to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and his wife Constanze. He studied under Antonio Salieri and Johann Nepomuk Hummel and first had his works published in 1802. After teaching in Lemburg he continued there as a freelance musician, making a long concert tour in 1819-21. He later lived in Vienna where he continued to appear as a pianist.

This new volume of piano works is divided into five sections: Polonaises, Tänze, Einzelstücke, Kadenzen zu Klavierkonzerten von Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Anhang. Many of the works included appear in print for the first time. The editors have gone back to autographs when available or first printed editions as well as re-engravings and engraver's copies in order to provide the most authentic edition possible. Obvious wrong note values and missing rests have been corrected and unequivocally missing accidentals and clefs have been added. Fingerings, where possible, are from original sources. Metronome markings have not been added, thereby leaving it to the performer's discretion in those works with no tempo markings.

The *Six Polonaises mélancoliques*, Op.17 stylistically sit somewhere between W. A. Mozart and Chopin, particularly in the way Franz Xaver uses trills. There are attractive trio sections and the music is nicely developed. I particularly liked No.4 in G Minor where there seems to be a deeper, more personal sound and No.6 in D Minor that brings more drama and a lovely rolling development section.

I didn't find *Vier Polonaises mélancoliques*, Op.22 any advance on Op.17, the invention flagging, with Franz Xaver tending to stretch his material by the use of extra repeats. No.4 in G Minor is, to my mind, the best here with more substance and some lovely Chopinesque harmonic shifts.

Whilst *Zwei Polonaisen*, Op.26 seem to take us back to a more Mozartian style, No.1 in D Major ("Polonaise de bal") is quite attractive in its Mozartian inflections with a trio section that is very effective. No.2 in C Major ("Polonaise élégante") has a rather obvious melody,

again more Mozartian in style and a sprightly trio section that provides a nice contrast.

The collection of piano pieces under the heading of Tänze include a jolly yet rather banal *Marche in G major*, *FXWM VII:9* (1809), an attractive *Ländler in F Major*, *FXWM VII:19* (1810) with a livelier trio section that has the feel of a country dance, two *Deutscher Tanz* (1812), *in D Minor*, *FXWM VII:23* and in *G Major*, *FXWM VII:24* both nicely written, a *Rondo in F Major*, *FXWM VII:1* (1802) that has a tune that seems familiar but which I just cannot place and a *Rondeau in F Major*, *Op.4* (1805), a simple but melodic piece that also seems familiar. The earlier of these works are easier to play than Franz Xaver's later pieces.

That is not something that can be said of Franz Xaver's arrangements of the *Allegretto rondo* from his *Piano Concerto No.2 in E-Flat Major* given here in both the full version of 1822 and the one of 1821. This is scintillating music that requires a virtuoso pianist or fortepianist, as does the whole of the original concerto.

Three later works, from 1841, that are included in this volume, are the lovely little *Allegretto in F Major*, *FXWM VII: 39*, that still seems to harbour a Mozartian style, an *Allegretto in G Major*, *FXWM VII: 40* that, again, is attractive and fluent and an *Andantino in A Major*, *FXWM VII: 41* that does move a little away from the influence of his father.

Franz Xaver Mozart never totally emerged from the shadow of his father, being known for the whole of his life as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Junior or Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Son. Yet this at least had the advantage of allowing him to continue performing his father's concertos, the core of his repertoire as a pianist, with some authority. Even though he had never known his father, he seems to have felt infused with his father's spirit. For such performances, Franz Xaver wrote his own cadenzas which have come down to us from a folder put together by his executor, Aloys Fuchs.

*Kadenz zu KV467, 1. Satz* *FXWM IXb: 1* and *Kadenz zu KV467, 3. Satz* *FXWM IXb: 2* have been transmitted in the form of two autographs that appear to be unquestionably by Franz Xaver and dated to before 1805. Examination of the autograph shows that *Kadenz zu KV450, 1. Satz* *FXWM IXb: 6* dates from around 1820 and, again, is undoubtedly by Franz Xaver. The handwriting of the autograph of *Kadenz zu KV466, 3. Satz* *FXWM IXb: 7*, the source for this edition, also confirms Franz Xaver as the author, dating from between 1839 and 1842. The fragment of a *Kadenz zu KV450, 3. Satz* *FXWM IXb: 8* probably dates from around the later part of Franz Xaver's life, possibly for a concert in 1842.

Often quite bold and adventurous, his writing caused a contemporary reviewer to remark on his *cadenza* for K450: "I only wish he would have remained within

the boundaries of the keyboard which the concerto has, and had to have, namely with the three line f as the highest note." Yet another commentator of the time spoke of how "very effective and beautifully in keeping with the original work" the cadenza for the third movement of KV466 was. It would be fascinating to hear these cadenzas played within the context of the concertos for which they were written.

As an Anhang, or appendix, there is *Kadenz zu KV503, 1 Satz FXWM IXbB und Auszierung or Ornamentation (Fragment) zu KV503, 2. Satz FXWM IXbC*. Both have only survived in copy form but are identified as being by Franz Xaver Mozart by a note written by his brother.

To have these works now complete in a two volume set is most welcome. Certainly there are individual works that will sit very well within mixed recitals.

**Work: Mel Bonis - Oeuvres pour piano - Piano**

**Music Vol. 10 , Danses B**

**Editor: Eberhard Mayer/Ingrid Mayer**

**Publisher: Furore Verlag 10097**

**Reviewed by: Bruce Reader**

**Diamant noir, opus posthumous 186**

**L'escarpolette, opus 52**

**Orientale, opus 32**

**Soirs d'antan, opus 34**

**Viennnoise, opus 8**

Mélanie Hélène Domange (née Bonis), known as Mel Bonis (1858-1937) was born in Paris of a *petit bourgeois* family. After teaching herself to play the piano she was allowed to have music lessons but it was a meeting with César Franck that led to her attending the Paris Conservatory. Studying under Guiraud and Bazille, she excelled in harmony, piano accompaniment and composition.

Bonis married a wealthy Parisian industrialist but, despite domestic responsibilities, she continued to compose, eventually leaving a body of works numbering around 300 that includes works for piano solo and four hands, organ pieces, chamber music, choral music, a mass, and works for orchestra.

Furore Verlag have continued with their useful edition of the complete piano works of Mel Bonis with Volume 10 (Danses B), the second of three volumes of dances for piano. Bonis' style of composition very much reflects the period of her life with the stylistic variety of her piano music filtering Chopin and Schumann through the sound world of Fauré to produce works that, whilst reflecting the advances of Debussy, have a distinctive sound world. Indeed, not only did she reflect the musical advances taking place around her, she is credited with

making a significant contribution to the development of French Impressionism.

The editors have based this new edition of *Diamant noir, Op. posth. 186*, on an undated manuscript. There is a leisurely flow to the music that appears at first to be rather conventional but one is soon surprised by the lovely harmonic shifts that occur. There is rather an attractive central section before the piece returns to the opening theme with a coda taking up high G before the conclusion. Interestingly, this piece was written under the pseudonym Edouard Domange. Bonis often wrote under a pseudonym, on this occasion the name of her youngest son.

There is also a flowing opening to *L'escarpolette, Op.52* a piece that again moves around harmonically, giving such a sense of freedom before returning to the opening theme. This is another substantial piece which, though opening in a 3/4 dance metre, becomes in reality 6/8 during its course with some lovely rhythmic subtleties. Here the editors have taken Alphonse Leduc's 1901 first edition as the basis for this new edition.

Alphonse Leduc's 1898 first edition was the source for *Orientale, Op.32* which has a rather regular rhythmic opening. Yet around the left hand rhythm Bonis' freedom is apparent in this lovely piece that explores a number of different themes before finally finding its way back to the opening theme, rising up the keyboard before concluding on a chord.

*Soirs d'antan, Op.34* presented the editors with a couple of issues. Firstly there is a note from Bonis on the undated manuscript stating, "Do not publish." Secondly the composer left two alternatives for the third theme of the piece, the editors using the first version as the most suitable. *Soirs d'antan* is a slow waltz that, from the opening has a wonderful freedom. The second subject is more passionate with a terrific dissonance before the third theme, even more varied, arrives. In many ways this is the gem of this collection of pieces and is published here for the first time. Despite Bonis' reluctance to have the piece published, I am glad Furore has included it.

This new edition of *Viennnoise, Op.8* is taken from a first edition dating from 1893 and is basically a traditional Viennese waltz. However, typically of Bonis, she subjects this waltz to some very adventurous harmonic progressions, making one think ahead to what later composers such as Ravel did to the traditional waltz.

Staple bound in a durable card cover, this new edition has a useful preface that gives brief biographical details on Bonis and information about the music. At the back of the volume there are two facsimiles produced from the autograph manuscript of *Soirs d'antan*. The

music itself is most clearly set out and is a delight to use.

These are most attractive pieces that are quite distinctive and deserve inclusion in recitals. They do, of course, form something of a bridge between the musical idiom of the earlier nineteenth century and later French Impressionism. Musicians will certainly find playing them most rewarding.

## BOOKS

**Title:** Paul Simmonds, *Workbook for the Eighteenth-Century Clavichord*,  
**Publisher:** Copyright Paul Simmonds, 2012.  
**Typeset, music texts reset, and edited from original version by David Hitchin.**  
**69 pages, spiral bound paperback, available privately from Paul Simmonds.**  
**Reviewed by Richard Troeger**

As explained in the author's Preface, "This Workbook has its origins in a series [of articles] entitled 'Eighteenth-century repertoire and performance practice' which was published from 1993 to 1997 in *Het Clavichord* (now *Clavichord International*). At the time I had become aware of the lack, in print, of the 'real' clavichord repertoire, the keyboard music of the late eighteenth century which drew on the clavichord's special expressive qualities and in my opinion only worked really well on that instrument.... The accompanying text was designed to guide players towards stylistic performance with the aid of references to the clavichord tutors of the eighteenth century, and it has been edited and re-worked to accommodate the new format." The actual contents include five small pieces by J.W. Hassler, four small pieces by J.A. Hiller, a single variation by Müthel, a Sonatina and a Sonata by E.W. Wolf, various movements from musical periodicals of the later eighteenth century, and somewhat more substantial pieces by Marpurg and J.G. Eckard. The tutors cited in the commentary are the standard works of C.P.E. Bach and Turk, and the now well-known 1785 Preface by E.W. Wolf.

The term "workbook" is something of a misnomer. There is no overall sequence, pedagogical or otherwise, except perhaps for inherent variety, e.g. one piece features syncopations, another, programme elements. The commentaries are usually one to two pages (occasionally more) of double-column print, probably a holdover from the original periodical. The different entries vary emphasis among biography, bibliography, and quotations from the three treatises on basics such as triplets against dotted values, "ordinary movement," arpeggiation, and so forth. Rhetoric is

touched on, primarily as programmatic; there is no in-depth discussion of it, nor of clavichord techniques and effects, nor varieties of clavichord in the period. Occasionally the author makes suggestions for approaching one or another passage; more often, the treatises are cited in regard to the compositions presented.

The Preface states that one purpose of the publication is to stimulate interest in a neglected repertoire. Given that the limitations of the original presentation in *Het Clavichord* are absent, it is to be regretted that a wider sampling with lengthier selections could not be included. The volume is attractively produced and printed.



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